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THE NEW REPUBLIC

A Weekly Journal of Opinion

JUNE 19, 1995

FOUNDED 1914
WASHINGTON, D.C.
ISSUE 4,196

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THE NEW REPUBLIC, Vol. 212, Number 25, Issue 4,196, June 19, 1995. (Printed in the U.S. on May 31, 1995.) Published weekly (except for combined issues dated Jan. 9 & 16, July 17 & 24, Aug. 21 & 28, and Sept. 18 & 25, 1995) at 1220 19th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036. Telephone (202) 331-7494. The New Republic Advertising Sales Office (212) 702-4882. Yearly subscriptions, $69.97; foreign, $99.97; Canada, $84.97. Back issues, $3.50 (includes postage & handling).

© 1995 by The New Republic, Inc.

(ISSN 0028-6583). Second-class postage paid at Washington, DC, and additional mailing offices. Indexed in Readers' Guide, Media Review Digest. Microform, CD-ROM, issue and article copies are available through University Microfilms Intnl., 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Telephone 1-800-521-0600. Internet mail address: tnr@aol.com Member, Audit Bureau of Circulations. Unsolicited manuscripts can be returned only if accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Subscribers: Please send all remittances, changes of address, and subscription inquiries to Subscription Service Dept., The New Republic, P.O. Box 602, Mount Morris, IL 61054. For subscription problems call 800-827-1289.

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CORRESPONDENCE

Executive privilege

To the editors:

Unless I slept through a Constitutional Convention, the anointment of Newt Gingrich by Fred Barnes ("The Executive," May 22) is a tad premature. Gingrich may think the Senate is as irrelevant as the House of Lords and the president as irrelevant as the queen, and Barnes may agree, but outside the Beltway the view is a bit different. The polls indicate that most people see this Rush Limbaugh clone as too extreme to run the country regardless of his ability to get House Republicans to heel, sit and beg. Don't shred your Senate gallery pass or concede the White House to the tourists quite yet.

KENNETH WIKLE
Calabasas, California

To the editors:

Your house conservative Fred Barnes's "The Executive" begins, predictably enough, with praise of Newt Gingrich's abilities as a picker of committee chairs and a motivator of fund-raisers and culminates in rhetorical sleight of hand of which Barnes's muse could be proud: "[Gingrich] seems to believe that Medicare can somehow be depoliticized, Social Security left untouched and the budget balanced in seven years. Or that he has the political skill and dominance to square these circles. And given the political dexterity he displayed in the first 100 days, the burden of doubt probably lies with his critics."

This conflation of shrewd politics and sound policies includes no concrete suggestion of how the policies can be effected, just an invocation of what E. M. Forster called "that sloppy 'somehow' " and an attempt to brand the Democrats as naysayers.

HOWARD S. LEVENSON
Brookline, Massachusetts

The real world

To the editors:

Colin McGinn's review of John Searle's *The Construction of Social Reality* ("Contract with Reality," May 22) is oddly silent about the sorts of political and moral questions we naturally expect to be raised by the work of a social philosopher. In Searle's case, there's a reason for silence.

Central to Searle's current thinking is the idea that social facts—social institutions, social practices, social mores—are entirely the invention of humans. These social facts derive what legitimacy they have solely from a human willingness to accept such legitimacy. In McGinn's nutshell, "Human creativity is at the root of social facts."

The main problem with such a view is that the criteria used to evaluate such institutions must also be seen as merely human inventions. All those social criteria that help us decide right from wrong, just from unjust, kind from cruel, generous from stingy, stand only so long as we say they stand. McGinn writes, "We recognize that it all comes down to one person agreeing with another, and we don't like the netless feeling that results ... and it is hard to accept that it is the only barrier that stands between us and chaos."

"Chaos" is a vague word. Change "chaos" to "racism," "anti-Semitism," "sexism" etc., and the problem comes into focus. If consensus had been our only barrier to racism, how could anyone have justified the ideals of the civil rights movement? In the South, the consensus went the other way. One could easily imagine a better-read Bull Connor telling Martin Luther King, "Our competing but equally groundless and arbitrary social and moral claims add up to nothing. My superior numbers—not to mention my water cannon—tip the balance."

If moral imperatives are merely chimeras, dependent solely upon the consensus of the moment, then why pay for social programs rather than spend the money on ourselves? If conservative politicians ever get around to reading contemporary philosophers they'll discover a natural and powerful alliance. Those philosophers, John Searle among them, will be asking, "How did we end up on their side?"

MARK GRAY
Seattle, Washington

To the editors:

I am surprised that Colin McGinn, who is usually a good philosopher, fails to recognize that John Searle's refutation of the "relativism" that pervades contemporary philosophy is only a caricature of what is being said against the correspondence theory of truth. Of course, there is "a reality out there," but only because human beings agree that such an assumption is necessary to make sense of our world. McGinn seems to admit as much when he says, "It is equally obvious that there could not exist human representation of the universe without humans." So that when

Temptations of a Superpower

RONALD STEEL

"*Temptations of a Superpower* deserves a wide readership among both foreign policy experts and laymen. [It] is a rare example of clarity, wisdom and intellectual integrity. It would stand out even in a time when the nation's chattering classes were able to distinguish argument from invective."
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Ronald Steel has been a brilliant and iconoclastic critic of American policy and American follies for a quarter century—perhaps our most brilliant. This book recapitulates absurdities and excesses of the Cold War now over, summarizing with a certain peremptoriness, and even a certain weariness, things Steel has often said before." William Pfaff, WORLD POLICY JOURNAL

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relativists agree with Searle and McGinn that the paper of the dollar bill is a "brute" fact and "not the result of any social mechanism," whereas the power of the dollar bill to buy a loaf of bread is "socially constructed," we do not have to deny that the distinction itself is a result of human needs and desire.

By agreeing that some needs and desires are almost universal, and that continuity in our view of the world is at least as important as change, relativists need not have airy sympathy for the radical feminists or neo-Marxists who deny that some knowledge is true and some false, or that, for example, astronomy gives us no more truth than astrology. For relativists can, and usually do, see human agreement as all that is needed, and certainly all that is possible, for cognitive truth as well as for moral truth. Consequently, relativity, as developed in various ways by philosophers like Wittgenstein, Kuhn, Quine, Rorty, Strawson, et al., is no threat to the commonsense view of the world—as is implied by your reviewer.

LAWRENCE HYMAN
Ridgewood, New Jersey

Child's play

To the editors:
Curiously, you have accused the Clinton administration of a tendency to "infantilize adult national issues" by bringing children into our considerations about "the morally and politically troublesome choices" that we, as responsible adults, have to make ("The Children's President," May 22). You ask, "Isn't it time we grew up?"

I would argue that bringing the considerations of children into our policy-making begs the same question, for every decision we make will have an impact on them. I think your question might be better directed to the rather infantile kind of thinking that is revealed, for example, in Jeremy Rabkin's article, "Sue the Government" (May 8), wherein the voice of the child cries out to the government, "Protect us or else we will sue!" As adults, it seems to me, we would do better to admit to our own culpability in the rising tide of violence we are now given to see.

Isn't it time we grew up? Just think how lovely it would be to hear adult voices engaged in serious and intelligent dialogue, as against the eternal polemic, the mud-slinging, name-calling, hissing and booing that gets us only as far as any such puerile behavior can take us: nowhere.

Besides, what is this teaching the children?

C. MAGIRL MILLER
Albuquerque, New Mexico

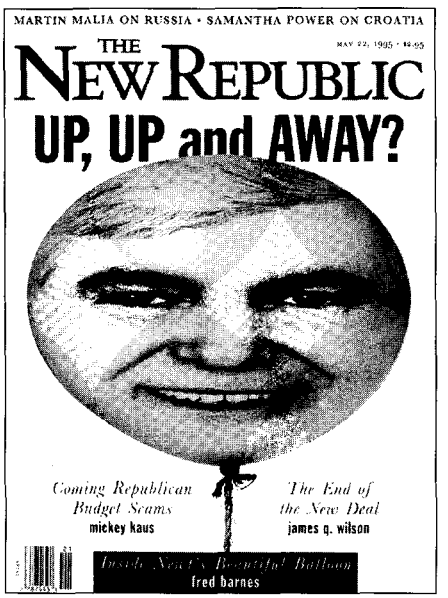
Two a day

To the editors:
In Masha Gessen's "How Drunk Is Boris?" (May 22), we're told that the World Health Organization considers more than three liters [of alcohol per year] to be unsafe.

Three liters of alcohol is the amount found in thirty-two bottles of wine (assuming 750 ml per bottle, 12.5 percent alcohol). Thus three liters per year would be equivalent to less than half a glass of wine per day.

Are we to assume that those of us who drink a moderate two glasses per day are consuming more than quadruple an unsafe level?

MARK BARTELT
Ontario, Canada



Back in business

To the editors:
I am amazed that in "Liberal Ghosts" (May 22), James Q. Wilson seems to ascribe the nation's wartime climb out of the Great Depression to the "restoration of business confidence" as part of his recent review of Alan Brinkley's *The End of Reform*. Surely confidence in American business is an important element of a healthy economy—something Keynes called "animal spirits." But Keynes realized, as did Ellis Hawley, an author Wilson praises effusively, that stimulated demand was the key to unlocking the potential of the American economy.

Such stimulation of aggregate demand was not produced by happy consumers spending their dollars, confident that American enterprise again had a rosy future. Rather, the economy sprung to life because of the unique demands made upon it by the nations prosecuting the Second World War. Deficit spending by Great Britain, the United States and the Allies, not an unquantifiable confidence in the business climate, vanquished the Great Depression.

Perhaps World War Two "brought a commitment to production and an endorsement of industry as the arsenal of democracy." If so, that confidence in industry only occurred after wartime deficit spending nursed the economy back to health. Consumer confidence was at best a by-product of the wartime full-employment economy, not its cause.

JEREMY D. SACKS
Washington, D.C.

Imported thugs

To the editors:
In her May 22 article titled "Guns and Pigs," Samantha Power used the figure "350,000" as the number of Croatians displaced by the Serb/Yugoslav National Army aggression. Yet she seemed to overlook two aspects of that demographic as she reported the Serb vow "never again" to be part of Croatia.

There are now living in free Croatia nearly 100,000 more ethnic Serbs than in "Krajina"—about 220,000 to 143,000. The latter figure is slightly more than 3 percent of Croatia's total population. Power might well make an informal survey to arrive at an educated guess as to what percentage of the current "Krajina Serbs" is the gang of imported thugs Slobodan Milosevic sent in even before Croatia sought independence.

The three 1991 Croatian census districts involved in the Sector West action were Pakrac, Nova Gradiska and Novska, with this ethnic breakdown: Serbs, 30,382; Croats, 69,750; Others, 12,107. Almost 3 to 1 non-Serb.

ANTHONY F. BAZDARICH
Washington, D.C.

Blown up

To the editors:
Your cover got it just right. Gingrich is an airhead!

ALLEN A. BOWERS
Beltsville, Maryland

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FROM WASHINGTON

Switch and bait

Are we neoliberals suckers? For two decades we've been romancing the right, trying to reach a grand centrist bargain. You know: old ends, new means. Subsidize housing—but with vouchers, not state-run projects. Aid the poor, but require work. Lower tax rates, but end tax loopholes. Try school choice, but make it "controlled" choice, etc.

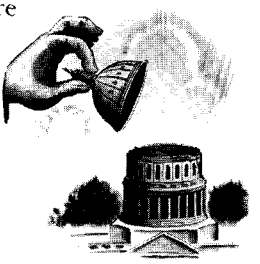
When Democrats ran Washington, the right seemed to reciprocate these overtures. Liberals who expressed any doubt about New Deal orthodoxy found themselves love-bombed with invitations to elegant lunches at conservative think tanks. Commissions were formed, common ground explored, bills cosponsored. But now ... well, something's changed.

A case in point: the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). A $28 billion-a-year program that sends checks of up to $3,500 to workers with meager earnings, the EITC has been the lowest common denominator between the neoliberal left and the pragmatic right. Ronald Reagan endorsed the idea in 1972; it became law in 1975, championed by Democratic Senator Russell Long. To the left, the EITC offered a practical way of getting money to the poor. But its appeal to the right was equally obvious: in contrast to "welfare," it goes only to workers and is available to intact families. Yet it requires minimal bureaucracy. You apply on your tax return; the IRS mails out the checks.

When Democrats wanted to expand welfare or raise the minimum wage in the 1970s and 1980s, Republicans proposed expanding the EITC instead. When Democrats pushed for state-funded day care centers in the early 1990s, Republicans insisted on expanding the EITC instead. The EITC was in fact expanded under Presidents Reagan, Bush and Clinton. Reagan called it "the best antipoverty, the best pro-family, the best job-creation measure to come out of Congress."

But that was before the 1994 elections. Now, suddenly, the EITC is "the federal government's fastest growing ... welfare program," according to Republican Senator Don Nickles—and we know what Republicans think about "welfare" programs. The budget resolution passed by the Senate cuts the credit by $20 billion between now and 2002. The House Ways and Means Committee is also hinting at large EITC reductions. There has even (inevitably) been talk of chopping the EITC up into block grants to the states.

Why the vicious turn against what was an unassailable, bipartisan initiative? There are three "policy" explanations, all inadequate. The first is the charge, made most insistently by Nickles, that the EITC is racked with "massive" losses "due to fraud and error." It's true that the EITC is susceptible to fraud, because (almost alone among tax laws) it rewards people who declare self-employment income they don't really have. (The IRS is geared to catch people who *don't* declare income they *do* have.) But most EITC fraud doesn't appear to involve bogus income. The fraud that has cropped up—people claiming phony children and getting instant electronic refunds—has been the object of a vigorous IRS crackdown (with further anti-fraud rules proposed by Clinton).



Second, the EITC can magnify the tax code's so-called "marriage penalty." If two $15,000-a-year workers marry, for example, their combined income will be too high to qualify for the EITC. But that problem could be fixed by offering bigger benefits to married couples. Meanwhile, even the current EITC encourages marriage in one crucial situation: nonworking single mothers (including those on welfare) can hook up with a working spouse and claim the credit.

Third, the EITC may create a mild work disincentive because it is slowly "phased out" for workers earning between $12,000 and $29,000. In this range, for every extra dollar you make you lose about twenty cents of your credit. But, again, the program also creates a positive work incentive for those who might do little or no work if the EITC didn't add forty cents to every dollar earned up to about $9,000. And it's more important to get these potential non-workers into the working culture than it is to squeeze every ounce of labor from couples making $25,000.

All three objections, of course, were known to Republicans who pushed the EITC for decades. Why do they suddenly carry such weight? Could it be because the GOP drive to balance the budget (while cutting "middle-class" taxes) subordinates all conflicting impulses? The EITC may be "the best antipoverty" measure, but it's too big a pot of money to pass up.

Then again, did the Republicans *ever* mean all the soothing things they said about the EITC? Maybe the whole bipartisan flirtation was a cynical bait and switch. First, Republicans get Democrats to drop their pet projects in favor of the EITC. Then, the moment the Republicans attain power on their own, they are shocked to discover the EITC is "fraud-prone." It's a sequence we may well see repeated elsewhere: first neoliberals turn HUD into a voucher program; then Republicans kill the vouchers. First bipartisan reformers give money to the states to replace welfare with work; then Republicans cut the money, offering states only fixed block grants. Next, they can "zero out" the block grants.

But I'm not sure—at least regarding the EITC—that the seduction didn't run the other way. When Reagan and Bush embraced the EITC, after all, they were implicitly conceding that the income distribution generated by the market can be so unequal that the government should step in and subsidize those at the bottom. This is a highly subversive principle, at least for Republicans. It can justify a whole range of public initiatives to "make work pay"—and, under the EITC precedent, as long as the assistance is restricted to workers it isn't "welfare." No wonder the right is eager to wriggle out of the EITC deal, to label as "welfare" any program that goes beyond tax-cutting and directly augments the market incomes of workers. True, only about 22 percent of the EITC amounts to such a direct subsidy (the rest simply wipes out income and payroll taxes). But it's a key 22 percent.

If Republicans are only now wising up to the activist implications of neoliberal principles, then neoliberals should hardly feel suckered. Instead, they need to defend those principles. Why shouldn't full-time workers be assured a material minimum? A few months ago, *The American Spectator* kicked off the current EITC-bashing with a flimsy article that nevertheless conceded "there is a serious problem among men with high-school (or less) education, whose incomes have remained stagnant for two decades." But the solution to this problem, suggested the *Spectator*, must await a "reorganization of the nation's economy." Hmmm. Isn't that *The Nation*'s line? Until the happy day when capitalism is transformed, we at least have the EITC. Let's keep it.

MICKEY KAUS

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

JUNE 19, 1995

THE ABDICATION, AGAIN

This year is the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations. The celebrations will go on and on, as politicians make banal speeches to command-performance audiences. It is unlikely that Bosnia will appear among their banalities. For it is in Bosnia that the debility of the United Nations has finally been revealed.

There is another Bosnian crisis this week. Not in Bosnia, of course. In Bosnia things are the same, only more so. A Greater Serbia is slowly and steadily emerging by means of a genocidal war. No, the crisis is taking place in the capitals of the Western powers, which are finding it harder and harder to escape the consequences of their policy of appeasement. The doves, you might say, are coming home to roost. And they still don't get it. When the Serbs made hostages of hundreds of United Nations troops last week, a spokesman for the U.N. thundered that "the Bosnian Serb army is behaving like a terrorist organization." But the Bosnian Serb army *is* a terrorist organization, unless you wish to include systematic rape among the terms of military engagement. And the general in command of the U.N. forces in Bosnia demanded of General Ratko Mladic "that he treat the United Nations soldiers in a manner becoming a professional soldier." But General Mladic is *not* a professional soldier. He is a man wanted for war crimes.

Here is what happened last week. The Serbs moved heavy weapons closer to Sarajevo and fired upon it. They have done so before. NATO issued warnings. It has done so before. The Serbs ignored the warnings. They have done so before. NATO launched a trivial attack against a Serb position. It has done so before. The Serbs responded by taking U.N. troops hostage. They have done so before. The only thing that changed last week, in short, was that the latent became manifest. *De facto* hostages became *de jure* hostages.

Also the iconography of the conflict was enriched. There have been many indelible images of the slaughter in Bosnia; last week's pictures of the scattered limbs in the Tuzla café were only the most recent ones. What was lacking, until last week, were images of the West's weakness. Now we have those photographs of those U.N. soldiers chained to those poles. Not exactly a picture of a helicopter lifting off the roof of an American embassy, to be sure; but surely a picture of our humiliation, of the forces of order flouted, of the triumph of tribalism over pluralism, of the lupine post-cold war world in full swing. No amount of "pragmatic neo-Wilsonianism" (the empty locution of Anthony Lake, who prefers the devising of bold foreign policy rationales to the devising of bold foreign policy) will erase these images of Western impotence from the memories of warlords and xenophobes around the world. They have been instructed that this is their time.

Two conclusions are being drawn from the success of the Serbs. The first is that the use of force has failed. "The Bosnian Serbs have now trumped our ace," as former Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger told *The Washington Post.* Eagleburger's pronouncement is utterly self-serving; the man was one of the architects of American appeasement in the Bush administration. Still, the Clinton administration will

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not exactly recoil from an analysis that refuses to entertain the serious use of real force. For this reason, it is important to understand that we did *not* play our ace in Pale last week.

Though the West has occasionally acted militarily against the Serbs in Bosnia, the West's response has been fundamentally unmilitary. No sustained air campaign against the war-making ability of the Serbs in Bosnia was ever really considered. (The precision of the wee assault on Pale, by the way, shows what can be accomplished by air power.) Like NATO's previous strikes, NATO's strike last week was more a demonstration of inhibition than a demonstration of the lack of it. This was not what the Serbs were fearing. It was what they were counting on. This trifling retort to the Serbs' violation of the Sarajevo arrangement played right into the Serbs' hands: it was a military response so predictably puny that it could serve only as a pretext for a Serb provocation. It also reassured the Serbs that they will never experience punishments proportionate to their crimes, and they assassinated the Bosnian foreign minister.

The second conclusion is that we must act forcefully against the Serbs to help ... the United Nations. The ministers of the Contact Group (including the foreign minister of Russia, who must have been chuckling) announced at The Hague that they intended to expand the size of the U.N. mission and to fortify it with heavier weapons. They said nothing about the nature of the mission itself. For all with eyes to see, of course, the essential absurdity of the U.N. mission was made brutally plain last week. The blue helmets are "peacekeepers" where there is no peace in "safe areas" that are not safe. They have not impeded the war or the genocide. They have impeded only a powerful and decent response.

Recall that the "safe areas" of Bosnia were supposed to be made safe by the U.N. There are six such enclaves: Sarajevo, Bihac, Srebenica, Zepa, Gorazde, Tuzla. The list of their names is a litany of lament. The U.N. has brought them little respite. When the Serbs attack, the blue helmets retreat. On May 21, *The New York Times* described a videotape that captured a Serb atrocity on a Sarajevo street: "The crack of a shot echoes in Sarajevo's valley. He [a young Bosnian man] falls. He lies on his side. He is curled in an almost fetal position. A United Nations soldier looks on." In Bosnia, a U.N. soldier always looks on. Bystanders or hostages: that is what the "peacekeepers" really are.

It cannot have escaped the notice of our policymakers that the U.N. is providing cover for the Serbs, except that the U.N. is providing cover for our policymakers, too. It saves them from the prospect of action. That is why the plight of the U.N. stirs them more than the plight of Bosnia. And nobody is less stirred by the plight of Bosnia than the aloof Boutros Boutros-Ghali, who put an early damper on international outrage when he called this a "rich man's war." The Bosnians, he said, were less deserving than those under siege, by hunger and by arms, in Africa. And the United States followed the secretary general's recommendation. We sent troops to Somalia and we sent no troops to Bosnia.

It is hard to think of a major crisis since the Second World War in which the president of the United States has wielded less moral and political authority. There are 22,470 U.N. troops in Bosnia, from eighteen countries. Britain has 3,565 men under arms; France has 3,835; Pakistan has 2,978. The United States has none, and the Clinton administration, the same administration that denounces the Republicans as isolationists, regularly boasts about it. In such circumstances, it is impossible for the president of the United States to lead. But he is not chafing. He does not wish to lead. He isn't terribly interested. When his national security advisers met last week in the West Wing, he stayed in the East Wing. He did tell a reporter, though, that "the taking of hostages, as well as the killing of civilians, is totally wrong and inappropriate and it should stop." And also that "I would ask him [Boris Yeltsin] to call the Serbs and tell them to quit it, and tell them to behave themselves."

To behave themselves. And if that fails, to go to their room. Does Clinton grasp that there is evil in the world? And does he understand that he is not the governor of the United States? It is a requirement of his job that he care about matters beyond our borders, matters such as war and genocide and the general collapse of America's role in the world, matters that will not gain him a point in the polls. The joke on Clinton is that he is almost certainly about to be hoist by his own isolationism. The result of the Bosnia policy that was designed to spare the United States all costs in lives and dollars may be a U.N. "extraction operation" that will require the deployment of many thousands of American troops and the expense of many millions of American dollars. *And* Bosnia will have been destroyed. Nice work.

It is time to conclude this sinister farce. The U.N. should get out of the way. Its forces must be withdrawn, so that the Serbs may no longer hide behind them, and then the Bosnians must be armed, so that they can fight their own fight, which is all that they are asking to do. Withdraw and strike, lift and strike. Obviously this is not as simple as it sounds. The withdrawal of the U.N. will mean war; and unless NATO provides protection from the air, for the departing U.N. troops and for the training Bosnian troops, the U.N. withdrawal will expose the Bosnians to the Serbs as brusquely as it will expose the Serbs to the Bosnians, and Bosnia will fall. But there already is war and Bosnia already is falling. Anyway, Bill Clinton and Boutros Boutros-Ghali and John Major and the rest are not keeping the U.N. in Bosnia to spare it horror. They can live with its horror. They are keeping the U.N. in Bosnia to spare themselves a reckoning with their own failure. For it is they who ordained that Bosnia become a place where it is always too late for justice. •

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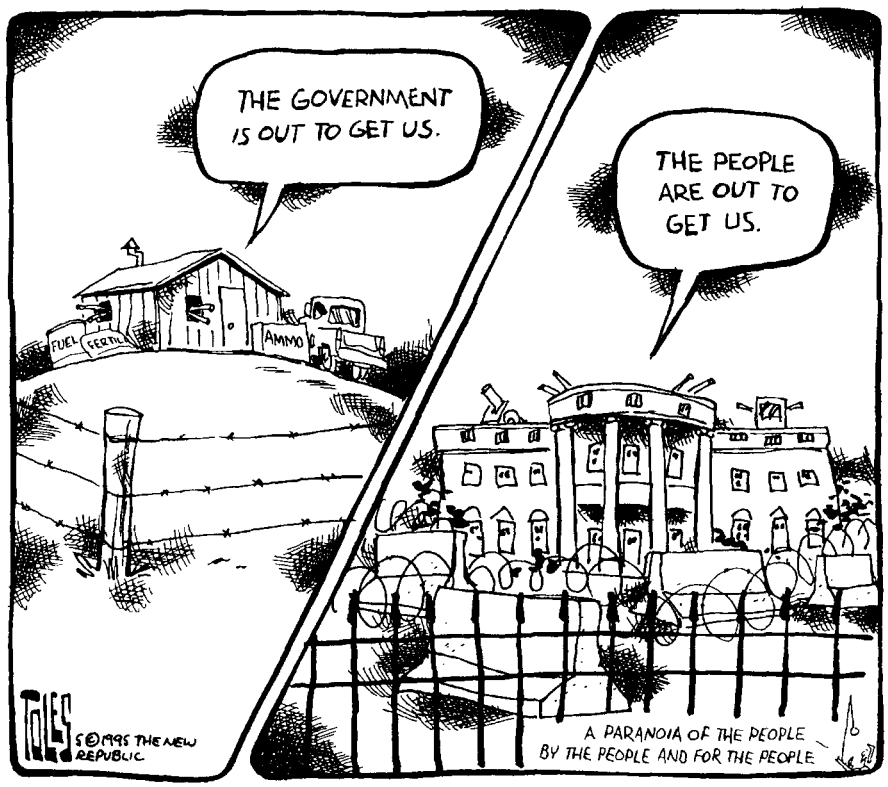
NOTEBOOK

SIC TRANSIT: Arizona Sheriff Joe Arpaio stepped up his "hard time" campaign by forcing inmates to watch broadcasts of a ten-part lecture series by Newt Gingrich.... Charles Staggs sued the Davenport Medical Center in Davenport, Iowa, for leaving a 14-by-14 inch sponge in his abdomen during a gall bladder operation. The medical center maintains that he swallowed it.... The lower house of the Louisiana assembly passed a bill that would punish with ninety days in jail and a $500 fine people who play loud music in their cars.... The Cambridge, Massachusetts, Dana-Farber Cancer Institute promised to do a better job treating patients after chemotherapy overdoses killed one and caused another severe heart damage.... New York performance artist Spalding Gray, seeking a "Washington insider" to assist him in the production of a monologue about the inner workings of the capital, hired a Canadian.


THE GOVERNMENT IS OUT TO GET US.
THE PEOPLE ARE OUT TO GET US.
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A PARANOIA OF THE PEOPLE BY THE PEOPLE AND FOR THE PEOPLE

BREAKING NEWS:

Bosnia full of strife, U.N. aide says

—Albany *Times Union*, May 25.
(Thanks to Gerald Moore of Latham, New York.)

THE POPULIST AT WORK: Fresh off the success of his campaign book with wife and ex-GOP operative Mary Matalin, James Carville is planning a new tract, a down-home screed against Republican theology. The book, says the Clinton adviser, is intended to provide ammunition for "the rank and file out there"—folks at a barbecue or at a bar—when they get into a fight with a rank-and-file conservative over, say, a point Rush Limbaugh makes. And how is he conducting his research into what the rank and file should know? For starters, lots of lunches at the The Palm restaurant in Washington, entertaining at his regular back table such liberal sages as economist Paul Krugman and TNR's own Mickey Kaus. "If there's something you want people to know that you know and they don't know," Carville says he instructs his guests, "then tell me, and I'll tell them." One day's agenda included lunch with Al Shanker and dinner with Norman Mailer, with whom Carville says he discussed boxing. Another day, Carville invited, among others, pollster Stanley Greenberg, economist Larry Katz and writers Nicholas Lemann and James Fallows—a "hell of a smart group," he calls them in a draft of the book—to his house overlooking the Shenandoah Valley. The men lunched on take-out chicken sandwiches and a bottle of Côte de Rhône from Carville's cellar. Afterward, Carville and one guest went shooting at the B.B. rifle range below the deck. "It's been the best experience," Carville maintains, "because I've really had the chance to talk and listen to some *really* smart people."

THE DYKINS DOCTRINE: We hereby nominate Lance Corporal John Dykins of Great Britain's Welsh Fusiliers for an all-expenses-paid leave, the purpose of which should be to brief President Bill Clinton, Prime Minister John Major and the other NATO heads of state on how to handle the Serbs. While the leaders of the West wrung their hands at the thought of deploying their vast, well-trained military machine against purportedly fearsome Bosnian Serb troops, Dykins was gutsily, and altogether calmly, showing how overwrought those fears are. Last Sunday, he spotted a dozen Serb soldiers violating the United Nations-declared weapons exclusion zone around the besieged town of Gorazde. With four other soldiers, he went out to confront the intruders. "I immediately decided to confiscate all the weapons, despite the fact that we were outnumbered," he told *The New York Times*. When they refused, the corporal ordered a comrade to cock his machine gun. "This had the desired effect," Dykins reports, "and the Serbs backed down, allowing my patrol to confiscate all their weapons." Now, what was so hard about that? •

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THE FLAPJACK FILE

CARNIVALE

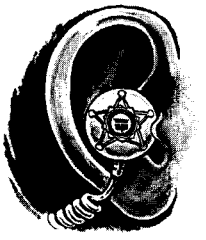
By Douglas G. McGrath

Monday, May 22

When Agent Searle and I reported for duty at the White House tonight, we found Flap out back by the cesspool he had built to remind him of home. He was dangling his feet in the water and the chicken fat was balling up around his calves. He wore a sweatshirt that said, "Newt Who?" He had filled a gun full of malted milk balls and was shooting them into his mouth at what I have to say seemed like dangerously close range. "Good evening, Agents Duke and Searle," he said, sadly. "How are your wives Annie and Margaret, respectively, and your children, Sam, Alex, Sue—"

Agent Searle, who has seven children, jumped in. "It's all right, sir. You don't have to name them all."

Flap fired twice into his mouth. "Oh, I like to. It impresses me." He named the kids, plus their Social Security numbers. We said they were all fine and asked how he was. "I am in pain," he said, and I don't think he meant just from those milk balls. "I came to this town because middle-class people were spending more time on the job and less with their kids, bringing home a smaller paycheck to pay for the growing costs of health care and housing." He shot a milk ball at the house. It hit the east portico, ricocheted off an elm and landed in his mouth. "I put the national interest above the narrow interest, the way JFK did with the Peace Corps or the way Elvis did when he persuaded the carnival members in *Roustabout* not to think of themselves but of the carnival. I guess y'all know that 'carnival' comes from the Italian, *carnivale*, which, broken down to its roots, means the raising of the meat. Speaking of broken to the roots, that's what I am because no matter what I've done, change has not been my friend. Change has been more like an ax-wielding bimbo who misunderstood what a trooper told her and wants to hurt me bad, and not in the way I like to get hurt, if you get my meaning. So, you know what? I'm not going to try anymore. If people don't like anything I do, I won't do anything."



Every president goes through a period of wanting to quit, but Flap may not be wrong because when we went in, Jesse Helms had introduced a bill that would cripple the president's right to conduct foreign policy. Under his bill, if the president wanted to call world leaders, he has to call collect. He also proposed closing the State Department and turning it into the Museum of Tobacco.

Thursday, May 25

Another security breach. A man scaled the fence and was halfway to the Oval Office window when we caught him. He wasn't violent and we let him go. I told him, "I know you're upset at the president but this is the way the process works: they nominate you, you're attacked, they hang you out to dry. Just go home, Dr. Foster, and eventually somebody will return your call."

Friday, May 26

Flapjack and his advisers spent the morning trying to figure out how to deal with the growth of these militia groups. Everyone's worried because not only are the groups larger than expected but they all vote Republican. Mr. Ickes said, "I think we have to fight fire with fire." "Great," Attorney General Reno said. "Can I light it?"

Mr. Ickes added, "We should create a Clinton militia." Flap sparked. "And what will it do, Harold?" Mr. Ickes said, "This militia will fight for the ideals which you most believe in, the issues on which you will not compromise, the principles you would fight, even die, for." "Well," Mrs. Flap said, after several minutes of silence, "up till that last part, it was a good idea."

Tuesday, May 30

Tonight there was the Cocktail Party for the Renewal of the American Family. It was a Republican affair, but Flap went in the hopes that people will forget he's a Democrat and re-elect him. He stood with Senator Gramm who was thanked by a kindergarten teacher for being pro-family. He said to her, "The family is the spine of the nation." As she moved away he said, "Speaking of spine, did any of y'all ever see *Diesel Dykes*? A 'friend' of mine invested in it, and there is a hot scene where this stewardess is being punished by this real hot female trucker with high-heeled shoes—"

"I know what *that* feels like," Senator Packwood said. "I was talking to an assistant of mine once and, to make my point, I had placed my tongue down the back of her throat. The next thing I know she's kicking me and calling me an animal." Justice Thomas said, "Any of y'all ever see *Old MacDonald Does His Farm*?" Ralph Reed said, "I should see these films so I can refresh my disgust with what's been foisted onto the public." He waved to a group of grandmothers. "Sometimes I have to refresh my disgust two or three times a week."

Then it was time for speeches. They all rose and denounced the president for being anti-family.

Thursday, June 1

Searle and I were in the White House mess having some coffee before we went on duty. We heard on TV that Flap's new policy of not doing anything has begun to pay dividends. For the first time in his term, Flap is at 60 percent approval. Before we could hear more, we got beeped. There was another man on the White House lawn. We raced out, our guns drawn.

It was just Flap. He had heard the same news and was doing cartwheels. •

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SARAJEVO POSTCARD

BOOMTOWN

By Samantha Power

A friend was preparing snacks for a birthday party Tuesday night. As he fixed the salad, an 88-millimeter mortar shell landed in the garden next door. In a thirtieth birthday blessing, nobody was hurt; the neighbor's children, it turned out, were playing elsewhere. An hour later, as a group of us scoured the old town's back streets for a party, the locals didn't recognize the scribbled address we showed them. "You know," we explained. "Where the shell just landed?" "Ohhhh. Take a right, a left, and you'll see it on the left."

Life has returned to normal in Sarajevo. Shells rain down from the hills with no consequences for the bomber and stark consequences for those at the receiving end. The U.N. Protection Force (UNPROFOR) is again derided as the U.N. Self-Protection Force. And now that the Serbs have cut off water and electricity, the citizens of Europe's most exhausted capital are washing in rain water and bathing in despair.

In thirty-eight months of war, Bosnians have coined their own theories of relativity: relative to Sarajevo, Bihac is a safe place; relative to Radovan Karadzic, Slobodan Milosevic is a peace-loving man; relative to the Bosnian Army, U.N. peacekeepers have a surplus of tanks; relative to Britain and Russia, the United States is a friend. But last week, many Sarajevans dropped that final point. "With friends like this," said one Bosnian Army general, stating the obvious, "who needs enemies?"

Meanwhile, all hell has broken loose in the U.N. designated safe areas. At the Korso, Tuzla's lively strip of twentysomething hangouts, sixty-eight men and women, all under the age of 28, were slaughtered by a Serb mortar last Thursday. In Sarajevo, as the Serbs were emptying nine U.N.-guarded collection posts, their comrades were taking out the top floors of an apartment building downtown. Now every single tank, artillery piece and mortar that has been under U.N. control is back under Serb control. In an event that Sarajevans liken to the windfall of discovering oil under Windsor Castle, the Serbs have added twenty-three UNPROFOR armored personnel carriers and six U.N. tanks to their amply stocked arsenal. Several of these have been spotted around town, compelling Bosnian officials to stop and search vehicles that were ostensibly brought in to improve their security. "We need an UNPROFOR that can at least take care of itself," said Kemal Muftic, an adviser to the Bosnian president. "Now we have to worry about them as well as us."

Brigadier General Jovan Divjak, a burly Serb three-star in the Bosnian army, is walking proof that, contrary to the claims of Serbs down the road in Pale, "living together" is not an anachronism. He sums up the Bosnian exasperation: "They didn't ask us. If NATO had come to us and said, 'We're going to bomb a few bunkers in Pale and leave the Serb artillery in place,' we would have said, 'Thanks, but no thanks.' "

But nobody asked the Bosnians, and nobody will. The decisions being made in Western capitals, and along the East River, aren't about them. They are about saving the West and saving the U.N.

A month ago, the peacekeepers were already paralyzed and humiliated. After weeks of Serb blockades on fuel deliveries to three eastern enclaves, a straight-faced U.N. military spokesman offered his synopsis of the situation: "Well, our guys in Gorazde are on mules," he said, pointing to a map, "and our guys in Srebenica and Zapa are looking to buy mules." In Croatia last month, in an assault on Serb-held territory known as "Operation Flash," Croatian troops trampled the observation posts held by Nepalese and Jordanian blue helmets. The Serbs then asked the U.N. troops to clean up the mess and bus out most of the remaining civilians. In April and May alone, seventeen French peacekeepers were killed.

Self-preservation has now become the mission's *raison d'être.* Humanitarian convoys have been halted, the airport is closed, the weapons collection posts are bare and the exclusion zones and safe areas exist in name only. The high point of UNPROFOR's week came when peacekeepers reclaimed a pair of observation posts that had been infiltrated by French-speaking Serbs wearing uniforms, flak jackets and blue helmets stripped from their French hostages. The Bosnian Serbs have "declared void" all Security Council resolutions and NATO ultimatums. Alexander Ivanko, the Russian U.N. spokesman who has spoken candidly about Serb "terrorism," received a death threat from the Bosnian Serb "Minister of Information" for "slandering and insulting the Serbs." "You should better go home before it is too late," Miroslav Toholj warned in a statement. "If Mr. Ivanko keeps on behaving like this, he might run into an accident."

As Sarajevo civilians push wheelbarrows and baby carriages five miles across town to fetch water, they don't even curse their false protectors. If UNPROFOR withdraws, they lose; if UNPROFOR remains unreformed, they lose; if UNPROFOR redeploys to less vulnerable spots, they lose. "We have faith in ourselves," explains Armin Racic, a 29-year-old soldier who alternates frontline duty with water-hauling family duty. "We can forget the world."

The feeling is mutual.

SAMANTHA POWER is a writer based in Zagreb. She has been covering the war in the former Yugoslavia since July 1993.

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"White House Madness" unmasked.

GRAMM, THE MOVIE!

By Sidney Blumenthal

When Richard Nixon died last year, Senator Phil Gramm of Texas eulogized him as a man of "intelligence, strength and courage." These generic words represented qualities that Gramm wished voters to see in himself. His praise for Nixon was in the Nixon spirit of the transparently self-interested agenda, intended to further smooth Gramm's way to the Republican presidential nomination, which Nixon gained three times.

Gramm's parallels with Nixon are rough. Unlike Nixon, Gramm began his career as a Democrat, and he has never completely ingratiated himself with the rock-ribbed minions of the GOP, even though, before he ran for public office, Gramm was a Democrat for Nixon in 1968 and 1972. When he first ran for office, in 1976, it was as a very conservative Democrat, because, even then, in Texas, that was the path to winning. (A belief in winners is the main thread in Gramm's ideology.) Once in the Congress, Gramm early established himself as a Benedict Arnold, banished from the House Democratic Caucus in 1981 for leaking Democratic strategy to the Republicans. His service as a turncoat, which forced him into the GOP, goes unmentioned in his current campaign.

Like Nixon, Gramm tries to craft his appeal to the resentment of the little man, squeezed by those above and below him, personified in the iconic figure of Dicky Flatt, a small-town printer and Gramm contributor. But, for all his assiduous calculations, Gramm has been late in his cultivation of the blessings of evangelical preachers. Nixon, from the start, never made this mistake. The reverends Norman Vincent Peale (author of *The Power of Positive Thinking*) and Billy Graham were often at and on his side. They threw the best possible light on the subject. Nixon was only bad in the eyes of the unworthy. He was really on the side of the angels: hated because he was truly good.

But now, having pandered to the religious right in pursuit of the Republican nomination, Gramm finds himself in a truly Nixonian quandary. He must overcome a scandal.

In 1974, as TNR readers will know, Gramm invested $7,500 in what he thought was a soft-porn movie, *Beauty Queens*, along the lines of *Truck Stop Women*, a movie that "titillated" him, according to his former brother-in-law, George Caton. (See "The Porn Broker," by John B. Judis, TNR, June 5.) But that movie was never made. Instead, the money was rolled over into another movie called *White House Madness*, by the same director. Caton says Gramm was excited by the prospect of the change and thoroughly aware of the content of this project. Gramm insists that he lost $7,500 on *Beauty Queens*, about which he claims to know only its title. He says nothing about *White House Madness*.

I now know why. I have seen *White House Madness*, the movie financed by Phil Gramm's money. (It was later renamed *The Way He Was*.) Unlike *Truck Stop Women* and the plans for *Beauty Queens*, it is not lite porn. It is unspeakable, but speaks (often profanely) for itself.

The movie Phil Gramm hoped to profit from is more than a nasty, puerile and relentless attack on the man he voted for and eulogized. It ridicules the office of the presidency, religion, the legal system and the military. It deliberately offends conservative sexual mores, shows marriage and parenthood to be hollow jokes and is filled with scenes of transvestism and bestiality. What follows is a rough account of what is in it.

The movie opens with a general, acting as the narrator, speaking to the audience about "our great and martyred president." The story we are about to see, he explains, is the true story "behind Watergate" and will "remove any doubt as to the president's innocence in this affair."

Nixon is in the Oval Office, dictating into a tape recorder: "... a new administration conceived in security and dedicated to the proposition that what you don't know won't hurt me." He turns to a picture of Lincoln and presses a television channel-changer. Lincoln turns into a picture of King Timahoe, Nixon's Irish setter. "Hello, doggie," says Nixon. Pat Nixon appears in the frame, calling him "Richard, dear." "It's always Mr. President," he chides her. Ron Ziegler, his press secretary, comes into the frame: "Spiro's on the phone." "Tell him to fuck off," says Nixon. Timahoe comes back into the picture. "See what I mean," Nixon tells his pet, "not a moment of privacy."

His daughter, Julie, and her husband, David Eisenhower, show up. "Is 'troublemaker' one word or two?" they ask. Rosemary Woods, the president's secretary, appears. "How about those anonymous letters to Ralph Nader and Barbra Streisand?" Nixon demands. Suddenly, Mamie Eisenhower materializes. "If only the general were here," she says. Pat comes back, and Nixon throws tapes at the picture, smashing it.

The general-narrator tells us that Nixon keeps the White House tapes "in the stomach of his stuffed dog Checkers." Nixon sneaks into a bedroom in the White House where he hides Checkers, who talks to him in a limited series of tape-recorded phrases: "The nation is in good hands, my president.... You've got them by the balls, my president." "Checkers," says Nixon, "there's something I must tell you and I hope you'll understand.... I've been seeing another dog." "You've got them by the balls, my president." The general-narrator explains: "It is a normal and healthy relationship such as any American shares with his private pet."

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Ziegler and Bebe Rebozo, Nixon's personal friend, meet in a men's room to plot the kidnapping of Checkers. "Those senators won't find nothing." That night, Nixon tiptoes to Checkers's bedroom, but finds the dog gone and faints. "I want Checkers back," he cries. "Checkers passed away," says Pat. "You must forget about him."

Checkers, as it happens, is stashed in the Watergate Hotel. "I want someone to go down to that hotel and get Checkers," Nixon instructs his aides, Bob Haldeman, John Ehrlichman and John Mitchell, who bop each other on the head like clowns.

While they sneak away, Nixon hosts a party. In a corner, Henry Kissinger tells King Faisal: "We've agreed, Egypt attacks Israel next year, not this year." Nixon mounts the stage, impersonating Groucho Marx. "Play the secret tape and divide $100,000 between you," he says. Nixon then introduces "a credit to her people, Miss Mona Mandrake." A transvestite in a Carmen Miranda outfit, daubed in heavy makeup, sings: "Nobody Know De Trouble I've Seen." Meanwhile, at the Watergate, his buffoonish aides set afire the room in which Checkers is hidden, burning him to a crisp.

It's another day. Nixon intrudes on his Cabinet playing Monopoly with Faisal. "This happens to be my Monopoly set," says Nixon. He throws the dice and lands on the "Go directly to jail" square. "If everybody is concerned about the tapes they wouldn't pay attention to your other peculiarities," says Kissinger. "You watch your mouth," Nixon replies. "You're talking about the dog I love." "The camel craps in the desert, the flies don't swarm around the palace," Faisal remarks.

Nixon's aides, meanwhile, steal Checkers from a doctor's office. At the same time, Nixon is cutting the ribbon to open a fast-food restaurant called "Dick in the Box." The aides unexpectedly turn up and chaos ensues. Nixon pulls the White House tapes out of Checkers's body: "Deep-six him for Christ's sake." Back at the White House, Faisal and Kissinger have a gunfight in the Cabinet Room.

The action shifts to a federal courtroom. Ehrlichman is on the witness stand. "Your honor, I've got to go pee.... I'm peeing in my pants. It's all wet." He offers a bribe to the judge, who grabs the wad of cash. "Doo-doo, ca-ca," say Haldeman and Mitchell.

In a subsequent scene, the most memorable in the movie, Billy Graham stands above Nixon, who is tied to a bed. Graham places a picture of Jesus next to Nixon's head. Then he puts various items at the foot of the bed: "Cross, holy water, garlic, stake."

"I love steak," says Nixon.

"And a good old American Bible," says Graham, who presses it on Nixon's crotch, prompting him to go into a state of demonic possession. Graham shakes holy water over him, reciting incantations.

Nixon sticks out his tongue and gives the finger. "Fuck the country!" he screams. "Fuck the country! Fuck the Congress! Fuck the courts!"

Pat enters and tries to comfort her husband. "What's happening?" she asks.

"Harry Truman sucks cocks in hell!" shrieks Nixon, and spews, à la Linda Blair, a stream of vomit into his wife's face.

Now, Nixon stands before a tribunal. He's naked, holding his genitals. "You are accused of high crime and misdemeanors," says the judge. "Not guilty," Nixon answers. Everyone laughs at his humiliation. The camera pans to show his naked rear. "I may have done a terrible thing, but it doesn't really matter. I did them for my dog." Everybody laughs. "I didn't do it. It was a bunch of black nitpickers." Julie wakes him up. "It was a dream," he says. "You mean I'm not impeached?"

Nixon steals into a White House bedroom, like Norman Bates in *Psycho*, where a mummified Ike is seated in a rocking chair. "Tell me what to do," Nixon implores. "When the going gets tough, the tough get going," Ike says. Nixon addresses the nation. "In the interest of national security and in my capacity as commander in chief of the Armed Forces, I have decided to take over and suspend indefinitely the so-called Constitution." An admiral standing next to him rips up the Constitution and tosses it over his shoulder. Pat decides to abandon him.

At a White House banquet, Nixon wears a Hitler mustache. "If you can't fool all of the people all of the time, fuck 'em. On a lighter note, as you know, I was born and raised in Whittier. It's a small town. It's so small, the mayor is a Filipino." Kissinger convenes a group of coup plotters. "We attack tonight," he orders, and turns to Martha Mitchell: "We want you to destroy the president. I have always believed we have much to learn from the culture of the masses, the movies."

Back at the banquet, Nixon stands on a table, shouting: "Repeat after me, Heil Nixon!" "Heil, Nixon!" "Very good." "Very good," repeats the crowd. Martha Mitchell throws water on him and like the witch in *The Wizard of Oz*, he melts. Munchkins dance on the table, singing: "The wicked Dick is dead."

But Nixon is alive, hiding under the table, naked. "Now you know why they call me Tricky Dick." He flashes a V-for-victory sign and then gives the finger. The end.

Checkers was easier to explain for Nixon than *White House Madness* has been so far for Gramm. In the Richard M. Nixon Presidential Library, a television set features Nixon's famous "Checkers" speech on an endless feedback loop, a flickering testament to his perseverance and grit. Perhaps, in the Phil Gramm Presidential Library, a monument to a man of "intelligence, strength and courage," a special room will be reserved for the showing of *White House Madness*, unreeling forever.

SIDNEY BLUMENTHAL is the Special Political Correspondent of *The New Yorker*.

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The McMartin child abuse case, the sequel.

WITCH HUNT

By Ruth Shalit

Indictment, HBO's ripped-from-the-headlines docudrama about the protracted trial over charges of child molestation at the McMartin Preschool in Manhattan Beach, California, is a good reason to pay for premium cable. Working from original transcripts and court documents, HBO skillfully shows how a case that began with a single schizophrenic mother filing charges against the McMartin family could spiral into a seven-year nightmare, as an unlicensed therapist working for the state coached child after child into elaborate fantasias of molestation. The made-for-TV movie, which will air again in June, has played to rave reviews. "Powerful and provocative," raved *The Boston Herald*. "Comparisons to the O.J. trial will be inevitable." One hardly needs to look west, however, for a present-day analogue to the McMartin melodrama. A parallel travesty is unfolding in Malden, Massachusetts, right in the *Herald*'s own backyard.

In 1985, at the height of the hysteria over multiple-victim abuse cases at day care centers, the Amirault family was accused and convicted of sexually abusing and torturing some forty children between the ages of 3 and 6 who attended their Fells Acres Day School. Seventy-two-year-old Violet Amirault and her daughter, Cheryl, are currently serving up to twenty years in prison for the crime. Violet's son, Gerald "Tooky" Amirault, is serving up to forty years. All three have maintained they are totally innocent of all the charges.

The Amiraults' plight has been meticulously documented by Dorothy Rabinowitz in a series of long editorials for *The Wall Street Journal*. It is impossible to read her columns without feeling that a clear miscarriage of justice has occurred. A look at the sources—court transcripts, interview tapes, expert testimony—that constitute the brief for the prosecution provides further evidence of the Amirault conviction as a case study of mass hysteria, fueled by panicky parents, vicious prosecutors, opportunistic therapists and a rapacious news media who showed no qualms about assuming guilt.

It was Labor Day 1984 when the allegations against the Fells Acres day care center began to unfold. They started with one 5-year-old boy complaining that his "pants had been pulled down." Soon, the state department of social services was questioning the boy, who proved unable to say anything more about what had happened. Yet based on that information alone, Gerald Amirault, who worked as an administrator and handyman at the school, was arrested and taken into custody. In retrospect, the incident looks to be entirely innocent. According to a teacher, Gerald had changed the boy into fresh clothes after he wet his bed at naptime, then sent him home with his wet underpants in a plastic bag. But Amirault was never questioned by police, never given the opportunity to provide that explanation until the trial.

By then it was too late. Panic spread, as eighty couples were called to the police station and warned that their children had been abused. The parents were told to look for "danger signs" such as bed-wetting, thumbsucking and bad dreams. They were told to grill their children about magic rooms, secret rooms and clowns—all hallmarks of headline-grabbing abuse trials across the country—and to ask their children whether the Amiraults "had touched them in certain places." The techniques used to determine whether sexual abuse has occurred have evolved considerably since the mid-'80s; and it's now clear that such leading instructions to parents are a terrible mistake. In the Fells Acres case, they did more than prejudice the parents: they hopelessly contaminated the case by introducing the concept of a "magic room" and "bad clown" to the children through the parents, instead of the other way around. Word quickly spread among the children that the Amiraults had done something naughty.

The Fells Acres students were then steered to pediatric nurse Susan Kelly, a maven of recovered memory who had researched and written on subjects such as nationwide satanic conspiracies and their ceremonies of so-called "ritual abuse." The transcripts of the children's interviews are truly astonishing. They clearly show that Kelly, a graduate student in psychology, led the children into their accusations. A highly suggestive interviewing technique, designed for cases where abuse was already an established fact, was used even though no evidence of abuse existed. Brandishing handfuls of anatomically correct dolls, with hypertrophied genitalia, Kelly pleaded with the children to incriminate their teachers:

Kelly: Did anybody touch you on your bum?
Girl: Nobody. Nobody didn't do it.
Kelly: Oh, do you think anybody touched the children on their bum?
Girl: No.
Kelly: What should I do if they did touch the children?
Girl: [No answer]
Kelly: What should I do if they did?
Girl: Nobody didn't do it!
[Kelly persists, asking: "Don't you want to help me?" and "Ernie would be so happy if you tell me."]
Kelly: Did anybody ever touch that part on you?
Girl: No.
Kelly: No? Would you tell me if they did?
Girl: No. I don't want to.
Kelly: You don't want to tell me?
Girl: No.
Kelly: You can help me. Oh, come on, please tell Ernie. Please tell me, please tell me, so we can help you. Please? Mommy would be so happy if you would help us; so would

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Bert. Please tell me. Tell Bert. OK, you tell Ernie. You whisper it to Ernie. Susan's going to cover her face, and you whisper it to Ernie. All right. Who touched you there?
Girl: OK.
Kelly: OK?
Girl: My teacher.
Kelly: Your teacher? OK. Tell Ernie which teachers. While Susan's not looking, which teacher?
Girl: Tracy [a teacher who was never charged].
Kelly: And where did she touch you?
Girl: On my hands.

According to Charles Sennott of *The Boston Globe*, the girl would later say "yes" to questions about abuse. Her name was one of eighteen listed on the indictment.

By the time the Fells Acres children had concluded their regimen of therapeutic dousing, Gerald Amirault, the father of two and expecting a third, stood revealed as a devotee of sadomasochistic scenarios too gruesome to be believed. Students told of a "magic room," analogous to a torture chamber, in which "Tooky" would rape them with magic wands and force them to drink urine. Violet Amirault, for years a symbol of rectitude in her community, emerged as a co-conspirator in these marathon sessions of sexual torture; according to the children, "Miss Vi" brought to school "a robot like R2D2 from *Star Wars*" who flashed green lights and bit the children "on the arm" if they did not comply with sex. In an equally mystical flourish, Violet's daughter Cheryl was really a "bad clown" who would "throw fire around the room" as she abused the children.

As the children's stories ascended into the surrealistic stratosphere, an out-of-control tabloid press fed the frenzy. "ABUSER IS JACK-OF-ALL-TRADES AT THE TOTS' SCHOOL," shrieked a *Boston Herald* headline on July 20, 1986. Another paper featured "Victim Profiles" of "The Tragic Young" ("Is he ever going to be normal again?... What's she going to be like as a teenager?"). Never mind that no teacher at Fells Acres had ever heard of a "magic room" or been refused access to any room in the building. Or that the kids seemed genuinely to like the Amiraults, despite what was alleged to be happening. Or that a girl who had supposedly had a twelve-inch butcher's knife inserted into her displayed no symptoms or qualms, aside from thumbsucking. That, in fact, none of the children showed any wounds or visible signs of scarring, according to medical records introduced at trial.

The prosecution thought it had a motive: child pornography. The Malden Police Department combed the Amiraults' home and school for evidence. They even seized twenty-nine photographs from the day care center. Alas, as the press glumly reported, the snapshots showed only "normal scenes," like kids playing on the swingset and in the schoolyard. Nevertheless, at trial the prosecution called as a witness a postal inspector, John Dunn, to titillate the jury with lurid descriptions of child pornography. ("I've seen fingers used as insertions," he intoned. "Fingers, guns, pencils, sticks, pieces of fruit.") He was followed by a parade of young witnesses in cotton dresses, ankle socks and patent-leather shoes. In Judge Elizabeth Dolan's innovative, child-friendly courtroom, they were permitted to face the jury, not the accused, as they clutched their Cabbage Patch Kids and talked of secret trips, magic wands and a "bad clown" named "Shasha."

A stone-faced jury convicted the Amiraults on all charges. At his sentencing hearing, Gerald Amirault, a small man with a large forehead, made an emotional plea for leniency. "I am not a child molester," he said. "I am a man who never so much as raised his voice to a child at Fells Acres." Gulping back sobs, he turned to the parents of the alleged victims. "I can look each one of you in the eye and say: I never harmed your children." The sentencing judge, unmoved, imposed the maximum.

The interviewing techniques and investigative methods used to indict the Amiraults, techniques so fashionable in the '80s, have come under fire in the '90s. A 1993 study conducted by researchers Maggie Bruck and Steven Ceci showed that repeated questioning of small children over time dramatically increases the likelihood of false stories of abuse. "Little children, especially preschool children, are phenomenally suggestible," says Richard Ofshe, a professor of social psychology at Berkeley who has studied extreme forms of influence. "They are very accommodating to adults. Their main problem is distinguishing reality from fantasy. A poorly trained interviewer seeking to elicit information on a particular subject can hardly fail to do it." The use of anatomically correct dolls has also been challenged. Controlled studies have shown a margin of error so high as to render the dolls useless.

Meanwhile, the mental health counselors appointed by the state of Massachusetts to work with the Amiraults have warned the governor in a letter that a "miscarriage of justice" has occurred. They suspect the Amiraults are innocent and hope for a commutation. Unfortunately, the Amiraults probably aren't going anywhere. William Weld, Massachusetts's crime-busting governor, is said to be sensitive to charges that he is soft on child molesters. The Amiraults haven't helped matters any by continuing to deny vigorously the allegations against them. According to parole documents obtained by *The Boston Globe*, the Commonwealth is committed to keeping the family locked up "until such time" as they "take responsibility." This the Amiraults have refused to do.

In a May 12 letter to *The Wall Street Journal*, Massachusetts Attorney General Scott Harshbarger made it clear he is uncomfortable with recent re-examination of the case. "The real victims here," he opined, "are children and their parents ... forced to relive the trauma and pain of tragedy that was closed almost a decade ago." Not mentioned are the grief and havoc wreaked on an innocent family whose lives have been destroyed by a case built on thin air, the pain of a daughter who says she cannot look into her mother's eyes, because she knows she will die in prison. •

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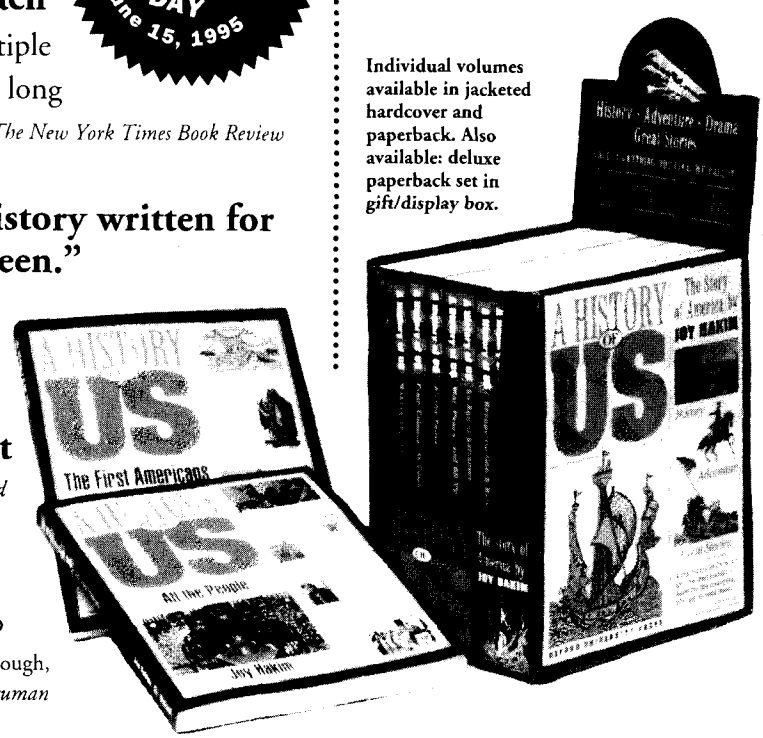

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JERUSALEM POSTCARD

BAD CABBIES

By Gershom Gorenberg

"This is the crappiest lot of immigrants we've ever had," said the cabbie. I was crossing Jerusalem on a spring evening to meet Sergey, a young historian of synagogue architecture recently arrived from Ukraine. Avi, the 45-year-old taxi driver, was letting loose about the flood of newcomers to Israel from the late Soviet Union. "It's brought all the whores, the ones who sell their bodies for pennies.... The young people ran off to America, and sent their old parents here.... They all bad-mouth Israel, how lousy they've got it here. A Jew shouldn't talk that way about home. I had one in the car, she was wearing a cross, said she was half-Jewish and half-Christian. Where's their Jewishness, their Zionism?"

Israelis, according to an old saying, love immigration but hate immigrants. My cabbie, speaking for the most disgruntled, bore out the second half of that claim. Statistics testify to the first half: in a little more than five years, the country has taken in 650,000 new arrivals, most of them ex-Soviets, boosting its own population by a startling 14 percent—the equivalent of the United States accepting 35 million legal immigrants. The influx is quota-free, since by law Israel grants instant citizenship to any Jew who steps off the plane and asks for it. It's a commonplace that accepting Jewish immigrants is the country's very purpose.

At one level, affirmation of open doors remains unchallenged. Israel has no National Front; the current influx has sparked no brawls or burnings; no politician has tried to cut generous state benefits to newcomers. Yet an undercurrent of discontent is growing. In part, that follows an old pattern for mass immigration. When Avi's parents arrived from Iraq months before his birth, Israelis with European roots spoke as bitterly of the "primitives" pouring in from Mideastern countries as Avi does now of the "whores" from Russia. Jews from North Africa, Iraq and Yemen were disparaged as unskilled, backward and pious. Even the European immigrants who arrived in the huge influx after independence in 1948 were criticized for their "Diaspora" character. Today, though, the unease goes deeper. Many Israelis are questioning the very ethic of accepting immigration. Public figures warn of non-Jewish hordes ready to exploit Israel's new affluence. A subtle scent of nativism is in the air.

The Hebrew word for Jewish immigration, *aliyah*, is better understood as "repatriation," with the newcomer seen as a refugee coming home after a temporary stay abroad that lasted centuries. Under the 1950 Law of Return, "every Jew has the right to be repatriated." In effect, the law defines Israel as the organ of a national liberation movement; it's meant to serve not just its citizens but dispersed Jewry. The word "Jew" was defined only in 1970, in an amendment passed under Orthodox pressure, as the child of a Jewish mother or a convert to Judaism. But the amendment also extended the right of *aliyah* to the child or grandchild of a Jewish man, and to their spouses. The new version explicitly mirrored the Nazi Nuremberg laws: anyone once oppressed as a Jew could ask for refuge as one.

In 1990, a class of Armored Corps officer cadets—polished sons of the middle class—showed me the place of *aliyah* in school-taught patriotism. A young education officer began a lecture on the new phenomenon of mass migration from the Soviet Union by asking the cadets to rate their agreement with the statement, "Israel must provide help to every immigrant who arrives." All but one of the forty-odd men expressed strong support. When the lone dissenter suggested that the country should regulate the rate of immigration, another cadet told him firmly, "Someone with views like yours shouldn't be an officer in the Israel Defense Forces."

By that standard, Labor and Welfare Minister Ora Namir would fail to make lieutenant. Last fall, in an interview with the influential, liberal daily *Ha'aretz*, the 64-year-old Namir said, "I'm not at all happy with the immigrants from the CIS in the last year and a half. A third are elderly, a third are seriously handicapped and nearly a third are single mothers." Children, she said, were "sending their old parents here so that Israel can spend its resources on them." In a clear call for limiting immigration, Namir asked that Israeli visa officials in Russia "understand the considerations I've listed."

But Namir's statistics were the stuff of fantasy. Immigration Minister Yair Tsaban has noted that a mere 1.4 percent of the newcomers were handicapped, and less than one-sixth older than 65. Israel's real challenge has been creating appropriate work for the intellectual cream of Soviet society, including tens of thousands of engineers, doctors and artists. Immigration has sparked a construction boom, fed high-tech industry and led to economic growth averaging 5.7 percent annually.

Yet, although Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin reprimanded Namir, he left her in his Cabinet. She has a constituency. Opinion polls, says Hebrew University sociologist Eli Leshem, show that support for immigration, while high relative to other countries, has fallen significantly since the euphoria that greeted the first planeloads of Soviet Jews. The crucial change is in the attitude toward *aliyah*: in early 1990, 83 percent of Israelis saw it as "very important" to the country; by last year, only 64 percent agreed with that article of Zionist faith.

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Though surveys show that hostility toward immigrants is more common among the poorer and less educated, it would be much too simple to assign nativism to a blue-collar *them*. The country is full of strangers, and the result seems to be a free-floating anxiety, quick to fasten on new stereotypes. One such image is that of newcomers as prostitutes—the product, apparently, of misleading, or misunderstood, press reports about non-Jewish women who have illegally entered Israel (as they have other European and Mideast countries) to work in brothels. "Even young girls in school get called 'Russian whores,'" says Luba Levin, a 42-year-old former Minsk resident, who has left two jobs here after being propositioned by bosses.

Another common complaint would seem to have more basis: that ex-Soviet immigrants are non-Zionists who are mainly interested in economically bettering themselves in the West. Alexander, a stocky 29-year-old programmer who arrived from Leningrad in 1990, says, "I couldn't read what I wanted, I couldn't say anything against official policy," in the Soviet Union. "And there weren't good computers." He says he'd switch to Canada's colder climate if he had a good job offer. But is Alexander typical? Sergey, the architecture historian, lists rising crime and "standing in line for hours for milk" as reasons for leaving Lviv—but then adds simply, "It was my dream to come to the capital of the Jewish state."

Many of the immigrants who arrived in earlier years were simply fleeing persecution and were hardly ideologues. But today's concern with immigrants' "lack of Zionism" may be partly a matter of projection, and it points to a deeper reason for the new nativism. Israel, notes Hebrew University political scientist Yaron Ezrahi, is seeing "erosion of the former bases of social solidarity and increasing expression of individualism." Army service has become less of an outlet for idealism; the kibbutz has waned in importance; the state has given up its monopoly on TV and radio. "In that context," says Ezrahi, "it's much less likely for immigrants to be perceived as participating in the fate of the people, and much more likely that they'll be seen as coming because Israel is better for them as individuals." If newcomers aren't perceived as making sacrifices, Israelis are less inclined to welcome them as idealists.

Even old-time believers in *aliyah* express another anxiety: too many non-Jews are coming to Israel, or want to, or could. Indeed, the government Population Registry released figures in April showing that one-fifth of "repatriates" from the former Soviet Union are non-Jews. Orthodox rabbis—and some secular politicians—consistently claim the real figure is much higher. Under the Law of Return in its current form, critics say, a bit of Jewish blood gives a Ukrainian Christian or Tatar Muslim a ticket to prosperous Israel. "Gentiles in Israel don't add to our health," says Uri Gordon, head of the Aliyah Department at the Jewish Agency, the quasi-governmental body that oversees immigration.

What's more, Gordon says, "I constantly get letters from Africans from all sorts of tribes, saying they're Jews." The state has rejected such claims, but if some "nutty rabbi" decides to convert them formally, he argues, each could bring his children, his grandchildren and their spouses to Israel. Last fall, Israel's ambassador in New Delhi reportedly warned that millions of Indians might claim to be Jews after he was contacted by 125 families who said they were descended from the Lost Tribes of Israel. Gordon wants to delete the "grandchild clause" from the Law of Return. In late April, Justice Minister David Liba'i promised to begin discussions on such an amendment.

Yet these fears also seem exaggerated. Only a few dozen Asians or Africans have undergone rigorous Orthodox conversions and received immigrant status. Officials estimate that only 2 percent of ex-Soviet immigrants qualified under the "grandchild clause." Most non-Jews have arrived with their Jewish spouses or fathers, which would also happen if Jews began coming in large numbers from any Western country.

Ironically, the debate over non-Jews entering under the Law of Return comes just as Israel is importing foreign workers from Romania, Thailand and elsewhere, to replace Palestinian building and farm laborers from the occupied territories. Just outside Jerusalem's Old City walls, dozens of deeply tanned Romanians work ten-hour shifts building a new hotel and luxury apartments. When I visited, I found a Soviet-born Israeli engineer giving instructions in Russian to a Romanian crew chief. Since the beginning of last year, the number of such *Gastarbeiter* has swelled from less than 15,000 to nearly 70,000. These aren't immigrants: they come on one-year visas and aren't allowed to bring their families. But employers are already seeking visa extensions for some workers, and others reportedly stay on illegally.

In a recent article, *Ha'aretz* editor Hanoch Marmari suggested that foreign workers were "walking time bombs" likely to remain here at the edges of society. In another article, he proposed letting the Law of Return expire, albeit in thirty years. "Israel," he told me, "maintains two kinds of immigration, both problematic." It's time, he says, to move "from an *aliyah* policy to an immigration policy," like that of any Western country. It might give Jews priority, but would accept others, based on Israel's own needs. The country, in other words, is more or less done liberating the Jews, and can worry about itself.

In one sense, Marmari is right: Israel will have to learn to accept non-Jewish immigrants. They come as a package deal with Jewish ones; they also come to any developed, relatively well-off country. But the real question raised by each planeload of new arrivals from Moscow and Tashkent is not, "Where's their Jewishness, their Zionism?" It's whether Israel can continue seeing strangers as countrymen coming home. If not, it will have lost something of what made it Israel.

GERSHOM GORENBERG is the op-ed editor of *The Jerusalem Report*.

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THE SOUTHERN COUP

By Michael Lind

When the new Republican Congress was sworn in last January, the South finally conquered Washington. The defeated Democratic leadership had been almost exclusively from the Northeast, the Midwest and the Pacific Northwest, with Speaker Tom Foley of Washington, Majority Leader Dick Gephardt of Missouri and Majority Whip David Bonior of Michigan in the House, and, on the Senate side, Majority Leader George Mitchell from Maine. The only Southerner in the Democratic congressional leadership was Senate Majority Whip Wendell Ford of Kentucky. By contrast, all but one of the new leaders of the Republican Congress hail from a former state of the Confederacy: Speaker Newt Gingrich is a Georgian, House Majority Leader Dick Armey and Whip Tom DeLay are both Texans and Senate Majority Whip Trent Lott is from Mississippi. Only Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole of Kansas remains as a fossil of the era in which the GOP was a party of the Midwest and the Northeast that seldom received a Southern vote. Strom Thurmond, the 1948 presidential candidate of the segregationist States' Rights Party, the so-called Dixiecrats, is now chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee—a grim irony, inasmuch as the integration of the armed forces was one of the reforms that inspired Thurmond to bolt from Harry Truman's Democratic Party in the first place.

The Southernization of the GOP has been a long time coming, but it has now truly arrived. In the first congressional elections of the New Deal era, in 1934, there were virtually no Republicans from the South or West; 90 percent of the Republicans in the 74th Congress came from the northern tier. As late as 1946, the GOP gained control of the House on the basis of votes from New England and the Atlantic, Great Lakes and Plains regions. By 1984, however, more than 50 percent of the Republicans in the Senate were from the South and west of the Mississippi.

These shifts aren't just at the federal level, either. Since the 1960s, the Republican Party has increasingly been able to elect governors, other state officials and legislators in the South, although local and county machines still tend to be Democratic. Last November, the gains were particularly dramatic, from Texas, where George Bush Jr. beat out Ann Richards, to Florida, where only the votes of elderly retirees (many from the Northeast) saved Democratic Governor Lawton Chiles from defeat at the hands of another Bush scion, Jeb. This local depth, in turn, has given the Southern Republicans what they had, until recently, lacked: a large pool of able, experienced politicians at lower levels who can be recruited to run for more important offices. Their ranks have been augmented by the defections of conservative Democratic "boll weevils," such as Bob Stump, a representative from Arizona, who joined the GOP in 1982, and Phil Gramm, who converted in 1983 after he was thrown off the House Budget Committee by Democratic leaders.

The foundations of November's Republican victories in the South, and in Washington, are now familiar. They were established in the 1960s by Barry Goldwater and Richard Nixon, with some help from George Wallace. In 1964, Goldwater's opposition to federal civil rights legislation made him the hero of white supremacists. Though he lost his presidential bid, Goldwater mortally wounded the older Northeastern Republican establishment. William Rusher, the former publisher of *National Review* and one of the architects of the Goldwater campaign, has written that it "turned the Republican Party over—permanently, as matters turned out—to a new and basically conservative coalition based on the South, the Southwest and the West, ending the long hegemony of the relatively liberal East in the GOP's affairs." Significantly, five of the six states Goldwater carried were south of the Mason-Dixon Line.

The success of Goldwater, and of George Wallace in his independent 1968 presidential bid, inspired Richard Nixon's "Southern Strategy" (which had its manifesto in Kevin Phillips's 1969 book *The Emerging Republican Majority*). Nixon's plan to substitute ex-Democrat John Connally for Spiro Agnew as vice president so Connally could run for office in 1976 as the candidate of the new Republican majority party, was wrecked by Watergate and the temporary revulsion for the GOP. Under Reagan, Bush and Clinton, however, the long-term trend toward Republican growth in the South and West resumed, with the result that today the stereotypical reactionary Southern senator with a drawl is more likely to be a member of the Republican congressional leadership than a Dixie Democrat.

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Where We Stand

By Albert Shanker, President
American Federation of Teachers

Less Is More

Many school reformers believe that raising academic standards will mean keeping kids in school for more hours a day and more days a year. Students in countries we compete with master more challenging curriculums and outscore Americans on tests in most core academic subjects. These countries all have a school year that is a lot longer than the U.S.'s 180-day average. (In Germany, for example, teachers work 225 days; in Japan and Italy, 215; in England, 195; in Canada and Norway, 190.)

The impression the American public has gotten is that the reason it might be good to lengthen the U.S. school day or year is so we could get more work out of teachers: kids in other countries are learning more because their teachers are teaching more.

But that doesn't square with the facts. The reality is that American teachers spend far more time in the classroom than their counterparts in other countries. A new survey by the international Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) shows that U.S. teachers pack more than 1,000 hours of classroom instruction into every school year—hundreds of hours more than teachers in other countries, even though they work more days. (See table at right.)

So how is it possible that teachers in other countries can work many more days a year but teach substantially fewer hours? What are they doing instead?

The answer is that they are busy with tasks that in other countries are considered a normal part of the daily responsibilities of a professional teacher. In the 15 to 25 hours of their work week that is not spent in class, teachers confer with each other about students' progress and ways to improve their instructional methods; they work with students individually; and they plan their classroom lessons, often together.

American teachers are teaching longer and harder than teachers anywhere else.

In most professions, there are at least two sides to the job. You work with your patients or clients for part of the time, and you spend part of the time with colleagues discussing what went wrong in your work, what's going right, how you did it, and how others have done it or fluffed it. This exchange of experiences, ideas, and problem-solving approaches provides a vital kind of professional development that most professional people take for granted.

The work life of American teachers is very different. They spend their days in classroom teaching with virtually no time to learn from and confer with other teachers. They work in isolation in their classrooms, and they do their planning, grading, and thinking alone at home.

Teachers in the United States are teaching longer and harder than teachers anywhere else in the world. But school policymakers might take advice from Jack Bowsher, a former top IBM executive who said, "If 20 percent of the computers in my computer plant were dropping off the assembly line before they reached the end, and the other 80 percent reached the end but had defects, the last thing I'd advocate is running the line an extra few hours a day or an extra few weeks a year."

Those who say more time is needed for education may be right. The issue, though, is how the time is spent.

Teaching Hours Per Year

Nation	*Primary*	*Lower Secondary*	*Upper Secondary*
Austria	780	747	664
Belgium	840	720	660
Finland	874	798	760
France	944	632	–
Germany	790	761	673
Ireland	951	792	792
Italy	748	612	612
Netherlands	1000	954	954
New Zealand	790	897	813
Norway	749	666	627
Portugal	882	648	612
Spain	900	900	630
Sweden	624	576	528
Turkey	900	1080	1080
United Kingdom	–	669	–
United States	1093	1042	1019
Country Mean	**858**	**781**	**745**

SOURCE: OECD

Mr. Shanker's comments appear in this ad under the auspices of the American Federation of Teachers. Reader correspondence is invited. Address your letters to Mr. Shanker at the AFT, 555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001. © 1995 by Albert Shanker.

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The elections in November were not the result of a political realignment throughout the country. There's been none, and neither party can claim a truly national majority. In fact, the major trend in party identification for several decades has been not realignment but dealignment. Self-identified Democrats have steadily declined as a percentage of the electorate, but Republicans have not commensurately gained. Rather, independents have grown in numbers so that they now account for about a third of the electorate, forming a *de facto third party of floating, alienated voters.* It seems unlikely that the GOP will be able to incorporate these voters permanently—particularly if they come to identify the Republican Party as the government party.

What's more, Republican gains in the South in the past generation have been offset by losses elsewhere. The most striking changes have been in the Northeast and Midwest, the homelands of the Republican Party from Lincoln to Rockefeller. Between 1952 and 1994, Democrats edged out Republicans in percentage of Congress members elected from the Northeast. The Republican congressional advantage in the Midwest, where as late as 1968 the Republican advantage was more than 2 to 1, has declined to near-parity. Blacks, the most loyal Republican supporters in the South from the end of Reconstruction until the Goldwater takeover of the GOP, have fled to become the most loyal Democratic voting bloc, along with Jews. Among so-called "Hispanics," Cuban-Americans tend to be Republican, Mexican-Americans in California solidly Democratic and Mexican-Americans in Texas increasingly Republican.

DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Nor is the new Republican dominance a function of any ideological shift toward intellectual conservatism in the country at large. In their mastery of the mass media as well as in their views, Rush Limbaugh and Pat Robertson are the heirs not of William F. Buckley Jr. and the neoconservatives but of the Southern and Western far right that vehemently and in some cases violently opposed the New Deal and desegregation.

To cite just one example of this lineage: the far-right media empire of the late Dallas oilman H.L. Hunt from the '50s to the '70s anticipated the present-day conservative media network in many of its details. Hunt's Facts Forum, for example, was a forerunner of the "The Rush Limbaugh Show" and the conservative National Empowerment Television. Founded in 1951, Facts Forum sponsored nationwide radio broadcasts played by hundreds of radio stations, as well as TV shows, one filmed in Washington, that were carried by dozens of stations across the country. Many of the themes of today's Republicanism—loss of sovereignty to the U.N., the totalitarian tendencies of liberalism and the corruption of mainline Protestantism and Judaism—can be found in the titles of free books mailed by the Facts Forum library, a predecessor of the Conservative Book Club: *We Must Abolish the United Nations, Hitler Was a Liberal* and *Traitors in the Pulpit.* Even gay-baiting, a relatively recent addition to mainstream conservatism, is an old theme of the Southwestern far right; witness another Facts Forum title, *Behind the Lace Curtains of the Y.M.C.A.*

Long before there was a Christian Coalition, H.L. Hunt was subsidizing the Campus Crusade for Christ; and before Pat Robertson established the Christian Broadcasting Network, Hunt had founded LIFE LINE, a nominally religious broadcasting and newspaper empire whose most influential officers, according to one historian, "were former FBI men and fundamentalist preachers." The complicity of contemporary conservatives like Rush Limbaugh, Jerry Falwell and the editors of *The American Spectator* in spreading crackpot conspiracy theories about Bill Clinton has a precedent, too, in the harsh attacks on Kennedy and Johnson subsidized by Hunt.

In some cases the link between Hunt's far right and today's Republican center are direct; a young football player named Jack Kemp, for example, along with Pat Boone, sat on the executive committee of Hunt's "District Speakers, Inc." Though Hunt's empire declined

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after his death in 1974, his son Nelson Bunker Hunt, an ardent admirer of the John Birch Society and a contributor to the Wallace campaign, helped preside at the marriage of the far right and the Republican Party. In 1982, he and his allies raised $350,000 for the National Conservative Political Action Committee. In 1984, during the Republican National Convention, he hosted a barbecue for Republicans at his ranch outside Dallas. Jerry Falwell gave the invocation, and Pat Boone and Bob Hope entertained an audience that included Jesse Helms, Orrin Hatch and Howard Phillips of the Conservative Caucus. The center of gravity of the Republican Party, in drifting to the Southwest, had moved far to the right.

Since the new Republican movement has much more in common with the old Dixiecrats than with neoconservatives, the most fruitful way to analyze and predict its course is not to read *The Public Interest* but to examine the history of state and local politics in the South. The greatest student of Dixie in the twentieth century was V.O. Key Jr. (1908-1963), a native of Austin who became a Harvard professor, famous for his book *Southern Politics in State and Nation.* (It is no coincidence that Key, like C. Wright Mills, another student of American elites who found refuge in the Ivy League, was a Texan; though Texas is not the most typical Southern state, its oligarchs, unlike the "gentry" of the Deep South, have seldom attempted to camouflage the harsh realities of their power.) Key refuted the theory that blamed Southern backwardness on the "poor white trash"; in fact, he demonstrated, the rich and educated oligarchy of the lowland "black belt," the so-called "Southern Bourbons," cynically manipulated low-income whites in the mostly white Southern upcountry in order to maintain strict control of the racial, social and economic order in the Southern states and the unity of "the solid South" in Congress.

Southern Bourbon conservatism was—and is—radically different from the conservative tradition of the North. Northern conservatives, from Alexander Hamilton to Eisenhower, though biased in favor of business against labor, favored a strong federal government, with a tax base adequate for funding "internal improvements"—turnpikes, canals, railroads, the interstate highway system—and a first-rate system of public education (Hamilton wanted to found a national university). Southern conservatives, from Jefferson and Jackson to today's leaders of the GOP, have preferred low taxes and low services—crumbling roads, overcrowded schools without enough textbooks. "We are a low-tax, low-service state," Jared Hazelton of the Texas Research League proudly told a reporter in 1985.

As early as the 1970s, Southern conservatives in the GOP broke with traditional Republican fiscal conservatism to support what have become the central principles of the new Republican Party: massive tax cuts and the ceding of control over federally funded programs to the states. In the Senate version of the 1978 Kemp-Roth "supply-side" tax-cut bill, which inaugurated the present era of deficits, not a single Republican senator from the Great Lakes and border states, and only 20 percent of the Republican senators from the Atlantic and New England states, co-signed the bill. In contrast, 40 percent of the Pacific Republicans, 33 percent of the Southeasterners, 60 percent of the Southwesterners and 100 percent of the Republican senators from the Mountain states co-sponsored Kemp-Roth.

The argument that today's conservative positions represent a rational response to alleged "failures" of liberal policies in the '70s and '80s is simply not true; Southern Republicans have favored tax cuts over balanced budgets for two decades, regardless of the state of the economy or the deficit. Today's Republican obsession with tax cuts is not a reasoned response to federal spending, but a rigid, quasi-religious expression of the Jacksonian political culture of the Southern and Western United States. The regional conflict in Republican philosophy lives on, as a glance at last May's vote in the House to gut the 1972 Clean Water Act reveals: a majority of Republican representatives from Connecticut and Wisconsin voted against the bill, while Republicans from Texas, Colorado and North Carolina, among other Southern and Western states, were unanimously in favor.

The differences between the older Northern Federalist-Whig-Republican tradition and Southern Bourbon conservatism are not limited to economic issues. Northern conservatives, though they could be as racist as white Southerners, tended to favor a federal role in civil rights: Hamilton wanted to free the slaves during the Revolutionary War; Lincoln finally destroyed slavery; Theodore Roosevelt infuriated Southerners by inviting Booker T. Washington to dine at the White House; and Eisenhower sent the Eighty-second Airborne to Little Rock in 1957 and criticized the 1964 Republican platform for not calling for stronger federal enforcement of civil rights. Needless to say, in this area, Southern conservatism was the evil which Northern conservatism sought to cure.

Goldwater was primarily responsible for turning the party of Lincoln into a "white man's party" which, by the 1990s, would be dominated by the ideological descendants of the Dixiecrats (and in some cases, like that of Strom Thurmond, by surviving Dixiecrats). In 1960, Goldwater denounced the Compact of Fifth Avenue between Nelson Rockefeller and Richard Nixon as the "Munich of the Republican Party" because of Nixon's agreement to revise the platform in favor of "aggressive action to remove the remaining vestiges of segregation or discrimination in all areas of national life." As Goldwater explained to an Atlanta audience in 1961, "We're not going to get the negro vote as a block in 1964 and 1968, so we ought to go hunting where the ducks are."

Ronald Reagan—who would rise to national prominence on the basis of his speech at the 1964 convention

continued on page 26

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nominating Goldwater—followed Goldwater's lead. Reagan voted in favor of a California state ballot proposition that tried to strike down open-housing laws, explaining that black complaints about real-estate discrimination were merely "staged attempts to rent homes, when in truth there was no real intention of renting, only causing trouble." One of Reagan's favorite stories on the stump, when he ran for president, was an anecdote about a "welfare queen," whom everyone understood to be black, making $150,000 a year. Though delivered in a denatured Midwestern voice, this was Dixie demagogy at its finest.

Southern-style racism has become more, not less, blatant in the Republican Party in recent years, if only in coded form. Mainstream conservatives, who in the 1980s were careful to identify themselves, rather disingenuously, with the color-blind integrationism of Martin Luther King Jr., have recently lionized Charles Murray and Peter Brimelow for arguing, respectively, that black and Hispanic Americans have, on average, innately lower intelligence than white Americans and that Latin American and Asian immigrants are unassimilable foreigners whose mores could unravel the republic. The new conservative obsession with eugenics and non-white immigration is to a large degree the result of the Southern electoral ascendancy in the GOP.

The Southernization of Republican philosophy has done more than transform once-moderate Republican positions on the economy and race. The politics of "culture war," adopted now by mainstream conservatives and neoconservatives as well as the far right, is, like so much else in the GOP, a transplant from the poisoned soil of the Bourbon South. Anti-intellectualism is not a traditional Republican theme; President James Garfield was fluent in Latin and Greek, Theodore Roosevelt wrote more than a dozen books and served as the president of the American Historical Association and Dwight Eisenhower was president of Columbia University. George Bush, who claimed to admire Theodore Roosevelt, in 1988 ran in most un-Rooseveltian fashion, against Harvard (and not because Bush went to Yale). Today's Republican anti-intellectualism is the gift of George Wallace to the GOP. Dan Quayle may talk about "cultural elites," but everyone knows he means "pointy-heads."

Theodore Roosevelt opposed both prayer in public schools and public money for religious schools. His successors in the GOP, however, seek to encourage small children to jump up in classrooms to praise Jesus and to replace the public school system with taxpayer-funded private schools. Conservatives have been careful to present the school-choice movement as a national movement, transcending race, region and religion. As part of this strategy, they play up the alleged troubles of Hasidic schools, like the Kiryas Joel School District in New York, and argue that the greatest beneficiaries of school choice would be poor black children in northern cities like Chicago who could receive first-rate educations in parochial schools. One may doubt, however, that the lily-white and disproportionately large Southern base of the GOP favors school choice primarily out of a disinterested desire to promote that centuries-old Southern nightmare—the Catholic-black alliance. The fact is that the chief beneficiaries of school choice would be Southern Protestant evangelical bible schools, which, incidentally, would have almost exclusively white student bodies. It is no accident that the Reagan administration fought the IRS over the revocation of the tax-exempt status not of a black-majority parochial school in the Northeast, nor of a Hasidic school district, but of Bob Jones University, a fundamentalist academy that banned the practice and promotion of interracial dating.

The beginnings of the present-day school-choice enthusiasm in the South go back to the civil rights era, when several Southern legislatures decided to abolish public education in their states altogether rather than allow white and black children to mingle in the same classrooms. The federal judiciary thwarted their plans; school choice seeks to achieve the same end by different means. Outside of the South, in parts of the country with strong traditions of public education and different political cultures, school choice has little appeal. In California, suburban Republicans, satisfied with their public schools, recently combined with Democrats to defeat a school-choice ballot initiative.

The great champions of public education in the United States have all been Northerners, like Horace Mann of Massachusetts, the father of the public school system, and Republican Senator Justin Morrill of Vermont, author of the Morrill Land Grant University Act of 1862. The Southern ruling class, though, has had an obsessive fear of the subversive effects of education ever since Virginia Governor William Berkeley in 1671 boasted: "I thank God there are no free schools nor printing, and I hope we shall not have these [for a] hundred years; for learning has brought disobedience, and heresy, and sects into the world, and printing has divulged them.... God keep us from both!" Education and free discussion threatened what W. J. Cash, in *The Mind of the South*, described as the uniquely Southern ideal of the homogeneous community, "a place where dissent and variety are completely suppressed ... where men become virtual replicas of one another." It is no coincidence that Southern universities of the first rank, such as Duke, Vanderbilt and Southern Methodist University, have tended to be located on the periphery of the Tidewater South, remote from the power centers of the Bourbon rich.

For generations, Southern conservatives have sought to use state governments to purge "radical" professors from state universities. Consider North Carolina, where New Dealer and anti-segregationist Frank Porter Graham turned the University of North Carolina into the leading Southern university. When Graham, appointed to the Senate by a progressive governor, ran for election on his own, one of the campaign ads that brought him down read: "WAKE UP, WHITE PEOPLE. Do You Want

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It is the 28th anniversary of the return of Jewish sovereignty to all of Jerusalem. Jerusalem Day marks the reunion of the Jewish people with the actual location of the historic events that made the Jews a nation. Jerusalem is, then, the one spiritual center of Judaism. With this return, Jews throughout the world celebrate the realization of their centuries-old prayer: "Next Year In Jerusalem."

With the Western Wall of the Temple at last restored to the Jewish commonwealth, Moshe Dayan expressed the feeling of his countrymen, saying, "We have returned to the holiest of our Holy Places...and we shall never again be parted from them." This was not a triumphal political assertion, but a humble statement of thanksgiving and religious faith.

May 28th was Jerusalem Day.

Later that summer, Abba Eban declared that, "the eternal link between Israel and Jerusalem is a link more ancient, more potent, and more passionate than any other link between any people and anyplace." At the same time, he solemnly noted the attachment of Christians and Moslems to Jerusalem, pledging that under Israeli authority all of Jerusalem's Holy Places are "beyond and above, before and after, all political and secular considerations."

For 28 years Israel has been true to this principle, providing careful guardianship of all the holy places within Jerusalem, leaving in place the appropriate religious authorities. All people of all faiths now enjoy unimpeded access to their holy shrines and treasures.

The recognition of multiple sacred attachments - Jewish, Christian, Moslem - to various sites throughout Jerusalem has been the hallmark of Israeli rule. It has also been at the heart of the work of The Jerusalem Foundation, an interfaith philanthropy founded in 1966 by Teddy Kollek, then Mayor of Jerusalem.

The Jerusalem Foundation exists to improve the quality of life for all the residents of Jerusalem. It has initiated and completed more than 1500 projects affecting every aspect of the city's life - parks, schools, libraries, community centers, hospitals and more; programs that foster an environment of tolerance, respect and peace, and that reflect the Christian, Moslem and Jewish contributions to Jerusalem's unique mosaic.

We invite you to join our effort to make Jerusalem a city at peace, a city where one draws closest to the highest ethical values of one's faith. This is our wish, and our pledge, on Jerusalem Day.

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Negroes Working Beside You, Your Wife and Daughters? Using Your Toilet Facilities? Frank Graham Favors Mingling of the Races." The media consultant behind the successful smear campaign was the young Jesse Helms.

Helms, more than any Republican politician, is responsible for the present-day Republican "culture war," which he pioneered during the 1980s with his attacks on the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). Since then, abandoning their scruples one by one, more sophisticated, conservative intellectuals have joined in this peculiarly Southern form of anti-intellectualism. In their tirades against the NEA, the NEH and campus ideologues, Northern conservatives like William Bennett, Lynne Cheney and Dinesh D'Souza are playing an old Southern tune.

In *The Last Gentleman* (1966), Walker Percy's protagonist returns after many years to a (white) South that has been transformed: "The South he came home to was different from the South he had left. It was happy, victorious, Christian, rich, patriotic and Republican." While the white South appears to be shifting its allegiances permanently to the Republican Party, the country as a whole has not—not yet. Whether the transformed GOP can expand from its new Southern and Western base to create a lasting majority remains to be seen. The new Republicans might be encouraged by the fact that a number of national social trends have been going their way. The three most important have been the nationalization of the race problem, the transformation of the world economy and the disintegration of the national parties in an era of factional and plebiscitary politics.

The nationalization of "Southern" racial patterns has resulted from the black immigration to large urban areas in every region of the country and the massive immigration from the Third World that followed reforms in immigration policy in the 1960s. In the past, the white majority in each region faced different ethnic "others": European immigrants in the North and Midwest, blacks in the South, Mexicans along the border, East Asians in California. Today in metropolitan areas everywhere one tends to find the same patterns—blacks, Hispanics and Asian middle-men in the inner city and virtually all-white suburbs beyond.

There is another parallel. In the New South (as in the Old South) the most significant geographic division was between the heavily black, Bourbon-dominated tidewater and the middling-to-poor white upcountry or Piedmont. A similar pattern appears to be emerging in the United States, with a division between the "brown belt" metropolitan areas of the coasts and lowlands, where both minorities and white wealth are concentrated, and the states of the Rocky Mountains and northern interior, where there are few nonwhites and fewer extremes of wealth and poverty (all of the ten most "typical" American cities—with Tulsa, Oklahoma, in the lead—are found in the American upcountry). The brown belt itself is divided between minority-dominated inner cities and homogeneous white suburban and exurban rings. Ominously, while most of the new nonwhite immigration is concentrated in a few coastal states, there is an ongoing white exodus from those same states. This raises the possibility that the old Southern Bourbon strategy of uniting black-belt whites and upcountry whites against lowland black majorities might be emulated, in the twenty-first century, by a "national" Bourbon strategy, allying wealthy, outnumbered suburban whites in majority-nonwhite coastal states like California, Texas and Florida with middling whites in the Rocky Mountain and Plains states, whose political power is grossly exaggerated by Senate malapportionment (see "The Infernal Senate," by Tom Geoghegan, TNR, November 21, 1994).

Another factor promoting the Southernization of America is the abandonment, by American business elites, of the older Whig-Republican economic nationalism, based on massive public investment in infrastructure (the railroads) and high wages (even before the U.S. industrialized, the wages of its free workers were the highest in the Western world). If the 1947 Ford Motor Company-UAW deal was the cornerstone of postwar American prosperity, guaranteeing union labor high wages to support a mass consumer market in the United States, Reagan's breaking of the PATCO strike in 1982 inaugurated the present era. The bipartisan economic strategy of today's America—expressed, for example, by proponents of NAFTA—holds that American competitiveness is to be achieved by weakening unions and lowering labor costs. This was the classic strategy of Southern Bourbon elites, who tried to attract Northern manufacturing by promising cheap labor, weak unions and low taxes. Just as Newt Gingrich recently argued that a higher minimum wage would make American workers uncompetitive with low-wage Mexicans, so the Bourbons of the New South argued against every reform proposal—free textbooks for schoolchildren, state highways—on the grounds that it would cost too much and drive away business and investment capital. Southern economists even warned that child labor laws would bankrupt the Southern textile industry. The GOP, originally the party of manufacturing tariffs and high wages, has now adopted the low-wage, low-benefit, low-tax approach to economic development favored by Bourbon Democrats.

By far the most dramatic example of the creeping Southernization of America is the replacement of disciplined party politics by a shrill, candidate-centered and money-driven politics. The basic polarity in the one-party New South was not between parties but between insiders and outsiders, between the Bourbon oligarchs and various charismatic populists. Both conservatives and populists competed to escalate "culture war" politics in order to frighten poorly educated whites into their camps. The new American politics is taking the same form, with increasingly radical outsiders appealing to grass-roots support—Buchanan, Brown, Perot—rebelling against slick, corporate-funded establishment politicians like Clinton and Bush.

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Although demagogic politics is not limited to the South, the Southern states have been less "laboratories of democracy," to use Justice Louis Brandeis's phrase, than laboratories of demagogy. While the grievances of populist constituencies in the oligarchic South were often real, they were almost always disappointed by their clownish or corrupt candidates. Of "Dixie demagogues" like Ellison D. "Cotton Ed" Smith, historian Joel Williamson writes, "They were essentially dishonest and negative. They did nothing socially, and they really did nothing politically. Their prime function, it seems, was simply to be colorful and to entertain." Rush Limbaugh, anyone? The most effective Southern populist was the least typical—Louisiana Governor Huey P. Long, "the Kingfish," who was able to break the power of the Louisiana oligarchy only by building up a combination of a police state and a criminal syndicate.

The Southern conservatives, while mastering the arts of demagogy, hedged their bets by disenfranchising as many lower-income whites as they could by means of literacy tests, poll taxes and residency requirements. It should come as no surprise that the GOP has killed all the measures to reform America's corrupt campaign financing system, or that *The Wall Street Journal*, denouncing measures like motor-voter and Saturday voting that would make it as easy to vote in the U.S. as in other democracies, raises the specter of "electoral fraud"—the same turnip ghost invoked by segregationist opponents of the Voting Rights Act. (The Republican attack on unfunded mandates has, among its other goals, the purpose of weakening federal protection of voter rights.) While thwarting all attempts to reduce the dependence of politicians on rich donors and interest groups, Republicans have been pushing a typically Jacksonian placebo for the ills of government: term limits.

Hedging their bets still further, Republican politicians are cooperating with black activists in using the Voting Rights Act to ensure the creation of minority congressional districts. While blacks and Hispanics are thus electorally ghettoized, the number of conservative lily-white districts increases. Even this contemporary Republican ploy has a little-known Southern precedent; the emancipation of blacks after the Civil War had the paradoxical effect of increasing the power of wealthy tidewater whites against upcountry whites in many Southern state legislatures. The reason: for purposes of apportionment, blacks were counted as "qualified electors"—increasing the political weight of the black belt—at the same time that they were disenfranchised by literacy tests, poll taxes and other devices.

Of course, for many of these developments, liberals have no one to blame but themselves. Liberals first nationalized issues like censorship, abortion and gay rights, inadvertently calling into being national versions of the local religious pressure groups that used to lobby state legislatures. The liberal strategy of de-emphasizing genuine progress made by blacks, for fear of promoting complacency, has backfired, creating a distorted image of generic black degeneration, like something out of racist tracts of the 1900s, in the minds of frightened whites across the country. It was liberals who invented the racial gerrymandering that the Republican Party has now mastered, to destroy biracial Democratic districts by ghettoizing black voters. Liberals, too, favored a "participatory democracy" based on primaries rather than party conventions that has led, in practice, to successful rabble-rousing by mad-as-hell right-wing talk-show hosts and mediagenic millionaires. Rejection of assimilation and integration for multiculturalism is guaranteed to keep non-elite groups divided and mutually hostile in the face of a homogeneous, almost entirely white national overclass. The neo-Bourbons could not ask for more useful enemies.

None of the trends I have described—from the centrality of race in politics and the adoption of a cheap-labor economic strategy to the phony populism and culture-war demagogy—is in itself particularly Southern. But the emerging combination clearly is. Anyone who doubts the importance of the transformation of the GOP by Jacksonian Southerners should try to imagine Dwight Eisenhower supporting congressional witch-hunts against federal law enforcement agents, or Robert Taft cultivating votes by denouncing abortion, premarital sex and homosexuality, or Abraham Lincoln saying, as Ronald Reagan did in his inaugural, "Government is not part of the solution, it is the problem."

Is there a way out of this? The construction of a national, political and social response to the Southern coup will require a long, and difficult, period of sustained effort. But it can only begin if Democrats—and those few principled Republicans who are left—actively contest the claim of the Southern-dominated GOP that it now speaks in any way for a new American majority. It does not. Democrats should point out that the new Republican Party is little more than the mouthpiece for the least "American" section of the country.

Does this sound prejudiced? As a sixth-generation Texan, and a descendant of Confederates (one of whom had his Georgia farm charcoaled by General Sherman) and of Southerners back to 1628, I would never suggest that Southerners, as such, be attacked or derided. The South exports some of the country's best literature, music and food—but it also exports its worst politics. Attacking Southern political culture is not anti-Southern—enlightened Southerners have been doing it for centuries. Here are one early Virginia politician's observations about North-South differences in political culture: "In the North they are cool, sober, laborious, independent, jealous of their own liberties and just to those of others." Southerners, though, are "fiery, voluptuary, indolent, unsteady, zealous for their own liberties, but trampling on those of others." Thus wrote Thomas Jefferson. Resisting the Southernization of America is a political task principled Southerners and Northerners should be able to agree upon. If they fail, George Wallace's boast may yet prove to be a prophecy: "Alabama has not joined the nation, the nation has joined Alabama!" •

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Changing Places

Roman Polanski, whose directing career has wobbled lately, now appears as an actor. This is no novelty for him: quite apart from his vicious gnome in his own *Chinatown*, he has often acted both in films and in the theater. (He played Mozart in *Amadeus* in Warsaw and in Paris.) Polanski has one of the two leads in **A Pure Formality** (Sony Pictures Classics), and his incisive performance helps to hold the picture together.

The ex-prodigy, now in his 60s, shows us through his own acting skill why he has been of use to actors he directed. He plays a French police inspector, chief of a small station deep in the woods, who is summoned in the middle of the night to interrogate the suspect in a murder. First, the diminutive Polanski impresses with his physicality. The suspect is played by Gérard Depardieu, who must be twice Polanski's size, yet there is never a Mutt-and-Jeff quality to the pairing. Polanski's gravity, his sheer confidence—not easy opposite the volcanic Depardieu—give him the means to be quietly solid against the other man's eruptions.

Then there are Polanski's eyes—not his eyes as such but his use of them. Eyes are where conviction begins, especially in film acting, and Polanski's eyes become the inspector's thought process. Where and when and how he looks tell us what we need to know about him at the moment. Yet there is no mere mugging. Anyone who wants to learn something about the craft of acting can go and watch Polanski in this film.

Everything he does is retrospectively all the more remarkable after the closing twist of the story, which gives further texture to his performance. Naturally, I can't reveal that twist, but I can mention, as the film's publicity does, that it has some connection with Sutton Vane's old play *Outward Bound*, which was once a stock-company mainstay.

Depardieu, bulging belly and all, continues as part actor, part phenomenon. From film to film his acting fluctuates in control and seriousness: here he overflows occasionally. But the phenomenon never wavers: his sheer power sustains him even when he skimps on concentration and leans on force. Unlike his art in, say, *Colonel Chabert*, here he sometimes seems to be saying, "Watch *this*!" And, drat him, it's worth watching.

Giuseppe Tornatore, best known for *Cinema Paradiso*, in which Philippe Noiret was dubbed in Italian, here returns the courtesy by, so to speak, directing in French. This was Tornatore's original story; then he co-wrote the screenplay with Pascale Quignard, who presumably did the Frenchifying. The screenplay is a bit attenuated, and the final surprise raises a few questions about what has happened, but it all holds well enough, despite the fact that basically it's a one-set play, not a film. (It wouldn't take much to convert the script into a play.)

Tornatore as director worries about this confinement. He strains to keep our eyes amazed. There are floor shots, starring Depardieu's bare feet, overhead shots through a ceiling fan, a shot up through a typewriter at the typist's face. And there's a shot I never thought I'd have the luck to see. At one point Depardieu tries to dispose of a patch of cloth down a drain, and we look upward at him from inside the toilet. Hitchcock complained about shots from within fireplaces because no one ever saw things from that perspective. He should be living at this depth-plumbing hour.

Antonia Bird, the director of *Priest*, is now in Hollywood. The result: **Mad Love** (Touchstone). The best thing about the picture is that the title is not figurative.

If Tornatore's screenplay was Frenchified, this one must have been Americanized. The author, Paula Milne, is English, I assume, since all her previous work was done for British TV and the London stage. But *Mad Love* is about Seattle high-school seniors, and the dialogue, though not often comprehensibly spoken, has been made feverishly local.

Chris O'Donnell, so taking with an Irish accent in *Circle of Friends*, is American again as he falls for the new girl in his school, Drew Barrymore. (Both seem a touch too old for their roles.) She, apparently, is just a madcap, and she entices the smitten O'Donnell into various escapades. When her parents ground her, she attempts suicide and is taken to a mental hospital.

O'Donnell, assuming a bond of youthful freedom against the oppressions of

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Dreaming of Rita. *An old man in Stockholm still worships Rita Hayworth and sets out to do something about it. Comic-touching complications follow for his daughter and her family. The extraordinary Per Oscarsson is the old man. (Reviewed 6/12/95)* **French Kiss.** *Kevin Kline is a French thief with a heart of gold in this wispy comedy-romance. He zooms. Meg Ryan is the American woman who falls for him. She flutters. (5/22/95)* **Priest.** *A gay priest, in fact. It's crammed with sensations, but it's so well done, on the whole, that it comes out on the serious side. (5/15/95)* **While You Were Sleeping.** *You won't be. Light and tasty cream puff with Sandra Bullock as the whipped-cream topping. She pretends to be a comatose man's fiancée, then meets his non-comatose brother. . . .(5/22/95)*—**SK**

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older people, "rescues" Barrymore from the hospital, and they set off on a long auto flight. (We have to overlook the fact that highway police would have stopped them early.) At first, O'Donnell can keep on believing that the girl is a free spirit breaking loose, but eventually he sees that she is really seriously disturbed. The flight ends. She goes to treatment; he goes back to his life. (Again we have to overlook something—the fact that crimes have been committed and that he would have had legal problems.)

Apparently Bird was attracted to this story as a blow against romantic illusions that disguise what is really a clinical condition. (Not a new film theme since 1966 and *Morgan!*) But her film suffers from tedious high-school clichés, from ineptly recorded dialogue, from the dullness of O'Donnell and the triteness of Barrymore. As for directing, not a moment in *Mad Love* touches the best moments in *Priest.*

The Broken Journey (Filmhaus) was written by Satyajit Ray toward the end of his life when he was ailing and was directed by his son Sandip. Ray père had long been hospitalized, with plenty of time to consider the medical profession in India, its concerns and priorities. His story, like several he wrote in later years, focuses on a member of the upper classes, in this case a successful physician in Calcutta, and the person's sequestering within his social stratum. Because of a flat tire on a motor trip—the doctor is on his way to address a Rotarian meeting—he gets involved in the medical crisis of an impoverished villager, and the doctor's social views are broadened.

This is by far the simplest Ray screenplay I know, an explicit morality drama. Its strength grows from the non-homiletic intent of the author, his genuine concern for the classes buried under social stigma. But no one will place this film among Ray's major works.

Sandip Ray, who began directing in 1980 and who had directed several of his father's TV scripts, clearly has tried to follow his father's style. (In an interview with Andrew Robinson in 1989, when Sandip was assisting his father on a film, Ray senior said, "He knows exactly what I want.") Sandip uses panning shots of a kind I don't remember in his father's films—opening on an object, then moving to a person—but generally the purpose of the directing is as Satyajit would have wanted: to induce us to really look at people, to value them adequately.

Soumitra Chatterji, in his fifteenth Ray role, is thoroughly convincing as the doctor, and Subhalakshmi Munshi is lovely as the sick villager's daughter who now, with the doctor's help, may become a nurse. •

ART SCENES *Galleries, Exhibits, and Events*

Terry Dintenfass Gallery 50 West 57th Street, NYC, 10019, 212-581-2268. Tuesday through Saturday, 10-5:30. *Nina Levy: Trinkets, Baubles, Mementos.* Recent sculptures based on the human figure and its parts. Made from cast and colored resin, these works offer intriguing reflections on personal identity and the paradoxes of human existence. First New York one-person exhibition of this Chicago based sculptor's work opens May 4th, through June 9th. Also on view in the Small Gallery: works by artists including Bigbee Barnet, Dove Evergood, Goodman, Gwathmey, King, MacIver and Pippen.

Swann Galleries 104 East 25th Street, NYC, 10010 212-254-4710. AUCTIONS: April 13: Important Works on Modern Physics, Science & Technology, Medicine, Natural History; April 20: Rare Books; April 27: Americana: The Westward Expansion; May 11: Art & Architecture Books; May 18: 18th & 19th Century Literature, Curiosa; May 25: Works of Art on Paper. Please call for preview hours, newsletter with full auction schedule, and to order catalogues with absentee bid forms.

E.M. Donahue 560 Broadway, #304, NYC, 10012, 212-226-1111. Tuesday through Saturday, 10-6. Trevor Winkfield: New Paintings, March 23-April 22. Quotes from John Ashbery; "Edith Sitwell, who wrote a book called *The English Eccentrics* and knew whereof she spoke, advanced the theory that eccentricity 'is not, as dull people would have us believe, a form of madness.' Rather, it is 'a kind of innocent pride...: and the man of genius and the aristocrat are entirely unafraid of and uninfluenced by the opinions and vagaries of the crowd.' These words certainly apply to Trevor Winkfield, an English eccentric who has lived among us since 1969." Transparencies and slides available, contact Ronald Sosinski, Director. Additional show: Marjorie Welish, new paintings, April 27-June 3. Catalogue available by Elaine A. King.

Anita Shapolsky Gallery 99 Spring Street, NYC, 10012, 212-334-9755. Wednesday-Saturday, 11 a.m.-6 p.m., Tuesday by appointment. GALLERY 1: Works from the Sixties: Ernest Briggs, Clement Meadmore, and William Saroyan; GALLERY II: James Bohary, Perez Celis, Robert Draffen, Harry Leigh, Carol Hunt, Omar Rayo, Stanley Twardowicz, Erik Van der Grijn. Ernest Briggs (1923-1984), one of the original Abstract Expressionist painters, explored the dynamics of strokes, smears and splashes. Clement Meadmore (b. 1929), although initially linked with the minimalists, has transcended geometry with work of uncommon force and elegance. William Saroyan (1908-1981) celebrated for his plays, short stories, and novels, was also an accomplished visual artist who neither sold nor exhibited his watercolors and drawings during his lifetime. Through June 3.

Matthew Marks Gallery 1018 Madison Avenue, NYC 10021. 212-861-9455. "PICASSO: Works from the rue des Grands-Augustins Studio, 1939-47" 29 April through 24 June 1995, Tuesday-Saturday, 10:00-5:30 p.m.
522 West 22nd Street, NYC, 10011, 212-243-1650. "RICHARD SERRA: To Whom it May Concern" 28 April through 25 June 1995, Thursday-Sunday, 12:00-6:00 p.m.

Forum Gallery 745 Fifth Avenue at 57th Street, NYC, 10151, 212-355-4545. Summer Hours (June-August): Monday-Friday 10am-5:30 pm. JOHN SPARAGNA: The first New York exhibition of Rochester, NY born John Sparagna, age 37, whose recent paintings reflect toy and game-like imagery. Sparagna bases his paintings on the examination of the world surrounding his two young daughters. Sparagna's paintings contrast humor and amusement with elements of life, death, and childhood memories, creating suspense, tension, and mystery. NANNY VONNEGUT: The first New York exhibition of Massachusetts artist Nanny Vonnegut, whose recent mixed media and drawings on paper reflect childhood memories, fables, stories, and the perceived imaginary world of her three young children. Vonnegut's works reflect a modern day child-like surrealism, with an Alice, or in this case, Nanny in Wonderland perspective. The imagery in Nanny Vonnegut's art recall her father's novels and her own family life. **Opening June 1, 5:30-7:30 pm.** Shows run June 1 through June 30.

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Robert Brustein on Theater

Death Marches

At New York's Instituto Italiano, while introducing Giorgio Strehler, renowned leader of the Piccolo Teatro Di Milano, I expressed the not very original opinion that, in the first half of this century, theater was dominated by playwrights (Pirandello, Brecht, O'Neill and Beckett) and in the second half by directors (Peter Brook, Ingmar Bergman, Robert Wilson and Giorgio Strehler). In his speech, Strehler modestly disclaimed any central role for himself or his colleagues, insisting that throughout his career his major theatrical purpose had merely been to realize the intentions of the playwright.

This of course is the declared purpose of every interpretive artist, but in the act of realizing a playwright's intentions, the director is often found reinventing them. Strehler's version of **The Mountain Giants**, which enjoyed a brief run recently at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, not only reinvented Luigi Pirandello's last work. The production literally reconstructed it. The play was unfinished at the playwright's death in 1936, the first three acts being unrevised and the fourth act unwritten. Using notes provided by Pirandello's son, Stefano, Strehler undertook to imagine how Pirandello would have brought it to completion.

In theory, this was a noble enterprise. *The Mountain Giants* was clearly intended as Pirandello's last will and testament. It sums up, in monumental fashion, his oft-expressed views concerning the antinomies between life and art. Unfortunately, ideas that were sharp and penetrating in such plays as *Six Characters in Search of An Author* are saturated with self-pity in his later more subjective work. In his final years, Pirandello seemed to believe that he was insufficiently appreciated and often misunderstood, despite his Nobel Prize and his election to the Italian Academy. As this suggests, his ego had become vulnerable to celebrity bloat—inflated even further by the idolatry of his late-life companion, the actress Marta Abba. Perhaps in gratitude for a series of meaty roles, she made him the object of almost religious veneration (Abba probably called him "Maestro" even in bed). Their letters are a record of mutual adoration and common vanity. "The only thing I have been able to do," he wrote to her in 1929, "is to think beautiful and lofty things."

The Mountain Giants is full of such beautiful and lofty things, which is why it sometimes seems more bloated even than Pirandello's ego. While his earlier plays examined universal themes of reality and illusion, this one is essentially a lament about the coarse unfeeling environment in which the artist is forced to create and to which he is obliged to submit. A touring company of actors, led by the Count and his wife, the actress Ilse, show up at a strange villa in the Italian countryside owned by the "magician" Cotrone. On his suggestion, they perform a play before the "giants" who inhabit a nearby mountain. These spectators behave in a brutal insensate manner, and when Ilse rebukes them, they riot and kill her. As the actors carry out Ilse's lifeless body, Cotrone complains that mankind has destroyed poetry in the world. But, according to the way Stefano Pirandello interpreted his father's intentions, "it was not poetry that was refused, it was just that the poor, fanatical slaves of life, who today have no taste for spiritual things but who someday might very well have, had innocently killed the fanatical slaves of art the way they would break rebellious puppets."

At a time when art is facing its own mountain giants in this country, few can dispute the appropriateness of this message. Yet there is something unsatisfying in the way Pirandello delivers it. Marginalized though they often are, and though modern artists can sometimes cause riots, they are rarely murdered, except in totalitarian countries. And rather than being hothouse plants withering in a hostile atmosphere, they are capable of considerable resistance to tyranny and philistinism. In *The Mountain Giants*, Pirandello encourages artists to join the crowd of victims and martyrs flocking to the whining wall. He might have done better to invest his characters (and, through them, us) with a little more spine.

Strehler's effort to complete the play (mostly in pantomime) provides some compelling theatrical images. If those images also seem a trifle familiar, that may be because this is his third production of *The Mountain Giants* (the first going back to 1947, the second to 1966), and he hasn't always managed to edit outdated ideas. His use of large puppets to represent the mountain giants never develops beyond Bread and Puppet conventions, his acting company has the outsize behavior associated with large histrionic temperaments, and his final image—when the actors carry the body of Ilse through the audience, their faces contorted with sorrow—evokes memories of the Living Theater. The two previous productions Strehler brought to these shores—*The Servant of Two Masters* in 1949 and *The Tempest* in 1984—were afloat with grace and originality. *The Mountain Giants* leaves us marooned in the attitudes and the gestures of the '60s.

Jonathan Kent's production of **Hamlet** (at the Belasco) also ends with a group of mourners toting a dead body, but this image maroons us in the '50s—namely Olivier's blond ascension in the movie version. Prior to going, I asked a friend who had seen the show in London what he thought of it. "Well, it's fast," he replied. At the time I thought this a peremptory judgment. Now I believe it's probably the most concise way to describe such a thoughtlessly paced and superficially imagined evening. The Almeida Theatre has lately been producing classic plays with splashy stars, architectural sets and clanging sound scores. Sometimes this works well, as in the Diana Rigg *Medea*. This time the production looks like something pinned to the tail of a rising movie star.

Rising, but far from orbital. Ralph Fiennes is a handsome and graceful actor, but he doesn't so much think about his part as pose for it. His Hamlet seems to have been inspired by nineteenth-century portraits of Kemble and Kean—lots of romantic attitudes and profile shots and stylized postures (in the funeral march, he lolls on the soldiers' shoulders, his right arm draped behind him like a piece of Greek sculpture). Although all the other actors have Victorian haircuts and cutaway suits (and behave like Dickens characters), Fiennes sports flowing locks and a Byronic open shirt (and behaves like Leslie Howard). His Hamlet brings us no new dramatic insights, only new stage business, much of it superfluous. He wears a commedia mask when he comes to kill Claudius in his closet and, in the play scene, sitting beside Ophelia, makes a grab at her privates. Ophelia retaliates, in her mad scene, by groping Claudius's genitals. People in the profession would call this crotch acting.

The supporting players are not much worse than Fiennes, just less centrally

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placed. Tara FitzGerald's Ophelia has the baby face of Leslie Caron but the baritone sophistication of Joan Greenwood, which tarnishes her innocence. James Laurenson's Claudius is a perfunctory business-like tyrant. Peter Eyre's Polonius is more absentminded than vacant-minded. Francesca Annis's Gertrude is artificial, particularly in her death scene, when she swallows poison and falls back on her chair, stiff and open-eyed, like a Tussaud waxwork. As for Fiennes, let us grant that he has the capacity to whip through blank verse, and can wield a sword like a musketeer. What he lacks for the role is life experience. It has often been said that each actor playing Hamlet defines his generation. If so, the Fiennes generation is self-absorbed, self-regarding, shallow.

Craig Lucas's new play, **God's Heart**, at the Trinity Rep in Providence, belongs less on a stage than on a CD-ROM. Directed in high-tech fashion by Lucas's usual collaborator, Norman René, it is like a video anthology of themes and characters currently stirring this playwright's considerable imagination. Any of these alone might have inspired an interesting play, but mixed up together they make for a confused and wandering evening.

Essentially, the characters form a series of couples, all of them dreaming and occasionally entering each other's dreams: a doctor and his liberal wife, a street-smart black kid (who deals drugs) and his girlfriend, two lesbians (one of them dying of cancer). In the most interesting device of the evening, the surviving lesbian is trying to install her companion's memory into a computer, and before long succeeds: the dead woman is resurrected on a television screen where she continues to communicate with her lover. Since the playwright's longtime companion recently died of AIDS, this effort to create a permanent record of a dead friend unquestionably has sources in deep personal loss. But because this emotion is not recollected in tranquility, the play seems animated more by grief than by coherence.

God's Heart tries to emulate the epic sweep and fantastic style of Tony Kushner's *Angels in America*, and Lucas certainly has access to a similar kind of wit and inventiveness. But lacking a unifying style, aside from video projections, or a unifying idea, other than the sharing of dreams and (in one phantasmagoric sequence) drugs, the playwright fails to connect his various plot strands and characters. The production is perfectly serviceable, however, especially Eugene Lee's constructivist set, and the Trinity Rep deserves credit for staging such an ambitious project. Nothing Craig Lucas writes, not even this as yet unformulated play, is without interest. He remains one of our most searching and exploratory writers. •

The Escape Artist

BY RICHARD POIRIER

Walt Whitman's America: A Cultural Biography by David S. Reynolds

(Knopf, 671 pp., $35)

In August 1890, Walt Whitman, by then a revered, monumentally grand and infirm old man, received another importunate letter from John Aldington Symons, one of the earliest of his many English admirers. Best known for his writings on Greece and Italy, Symons was once again asking in a guarded way the question he had asked in a letter, still unanswered, in 1872, eighteen years earlier. Did Whitman's recurrent stress on the beauty of male comradeship mean that the poet was a lover of men? (The term "homosexual" wasn't to enter the language until 1892, the year of Whitman's death.) And wasn't this factor essential to the meaning of the Calamus series of poems, which had become part of the ever evolving *Leaves of Grass* with the publication of the third edition in 1860? Symons hinted that his discretion could be counted on, as might be expected of someone reputed to be homosexual himself, married and the father of four. While "burning for a revelation of your more developed meaning," he hoped besides for "some story of athletic friendship from which to learn the truth."

It was not until 1888 that Whitman showed the unanswered letter of 1872 to his confidant and future biographer,

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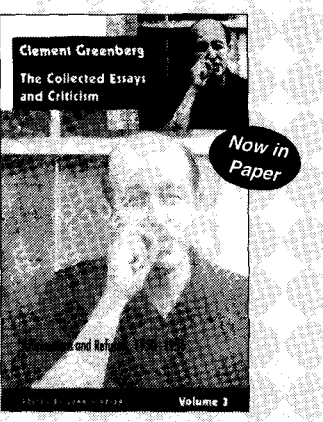

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Horace Traubel, remarking, as Traubel recalls, that Symons, while he is "a royal good fellow," is "always driving me about that: Is that what Calamus means?" When he finally did respond to Symons's "urgent persistence" two years later, it was to reject the intimations about the Calamus poems as "morbid inferences which are disavowed by me and seem damnable." He met the inferences about himself with the glaring lie that "Tho' unmarried I have had six children—two are dead—One living southern grandchild, fine boy, who writes to me occasionally. Circumstances connected with their benefit and fortune have separated me from intimate relations." As in his poetry, Whitman here used an elaborate falsification of "intimate relations" to excuse or to deny the true absence of such relations in his life.

The lie about fathering six children is important to an understanding of Whitman as a man and especially as a poet, and so is the maneuver by which he concluded the letter: "I see I have written with haste & too great effusion—but let it stand." In other words, what I say can be believed since I admit to saying it without calculation, hastily and effusively. This is a claim made repeatedly in *Leaves of Grass*, where fictions about his life are meant to be verified by further fictions about the nature of his writing. If this is to be judged immoral, then so is a lot of great poetry.

The letter does reveal a truth about the gregarious-seeming and yet truly isolate Whitman of the poetry, the Whitman who wants continually to insist on a fiction of "intimate relations" with the reader. The reader is the "you" to which the poems refer, when it doesn't refer to the poetry itself or to the poet's "soul." Even as this Whitman amorously cozies up to you he is already preparing to withdraw, to disclaim the intimacy that he initiates. Time and again in his greatest poems, mostly published between 1855 and 1860, he tells us that Walt Whitman *is* his book, and that you hold him in your hand—though only for a moment.

> Camerado, this is no book,
> Who touches this touches a man,
> (Is it night? are we together alone?)
> It is I you hold and who holds you,
> I spring from the pages into your arms—
> decease calls me
> forth.

The sexuality of Whitman's poems, which need not mean the sexuality of Whitman, falls into a long tradition of erotic mysticism wherein "insubstantial death," as Romeo calls it in the tomb, "is amorous." To come is to go; to leap into a beloved, the reader in this and many other instances, is at the same time to be called away: "So Long!" is the poem's title. "Is it night? are we together alone?" You bet; see you later. "Missing me one place search another," he concludes "Song of Myself," "I stop somewhere waiting for you."

Whitman was ever fearful of getting detained in a personal, particularly in a sexual, relationship, or of being locked into one identity, to the point where he created a cartography of himself including "my self," "my soul" and, "Me myself" or the "real Me." Soul, in his poetry, has less of the conventional religious connotations that David Reynolds wants to assign it. It is more closely identified with the ancient poetic figure of Inspiration, the descendental muse. In section five of "Song of Myself," indeed, the soul as muse quite graphically descends on Whitman by apparently going down on him:

> I mind how we lay in June, such a transparent summer
> morning;
> You settled your head athwart my hips and gently turned
> over upon me,
> And parted the shirt from my bosom-bone, and plunged your
> tongue to my barestript heart,
> And reached till you felt my beard, and reached till you held
> my feet.

By contrast, the "real Me" or "Me myself" is a figure of awesome severity who would never put itself in the positions here imagined for "my self" and "my soul." In the great, and greatly despairing, poem written five years later, in 1860, and called "As I Ebb'd with the Ocean of Life," Whitman describes himself walking along the shoreline at Paumanok thinking of "the pride of which I utter poems" and feeling

> O baffled, balk'd, bent to the very earth,
> Oppress'd with myself that I have dared to open my mouth,
> Aware now that amid all that blab whose echoes recoil upon
> me I have not once had the least idea who or what I am,
> But that before all my arrogant poems the real Me stands yet
> untouch'd, untold, altogether unreach'd.

Even after Reynolds's "cultural biography" and the twenty or so biographies that have preceded it, Whitman's "real Me" remains "altogether unreach'd," a mystery. I don't mean to be ungrateful for Reynolds's industrious labors as a cultural historian, but I regret to say that he is trying to do something that cannot be done when the writer in question is a poet of Whitman's genius. Reynolds intends to demonstrate that a proper understanding of Whitman's poetry, which is after all what any critical labor is finally about, depends on the poetry's being read in a reciprocal relation with other cultural and political materials assembled from roughly the last half of the American nineteenth century. This sort of procedure can sometimes pay off when the writer in question is less dauntingly original. In the case of Whitman, however, the result could have been predicted, which is that his poetry more or less escapes untouched.

Even as Whitman in his poetry often invites cultural, historical and political explanations, the poetry all the while resists them, almost as much as does that of his near contemporary Emily Dickinson, who in her lifetime published only seven of her poems. Reynolds attempts to demonstrate, for example, that Whitman's extensive journalistic writings before 1855, and his cultural and political involvements, inform and even predict the sudden, otherwise baffling and little-noticed appearance that year of the first edition of *Leaves of Grass*. No one is likely to be persuaded who knows how to read the poetry, or who has read such essential interpreters as Harold Bloom and Keary Larson, neither of whom is mentioned in this book of nearly 700 pages, or Michael Moon, who is mentioned only once.

Reynolds's cultural and chronological efforts at dovetailing are oblivious to an evident and stubborn fact: the poetry in the 1855 volume, particularly the as yet untitled "Song of Myself," is one of the inexplicable wonders of human literary creation, as strange as great poetry has ever been or is ever likely to become. Unexplained, too, is why, if the poetry is indeed as expressive of cultural assumptions as Reynolds assumes, it was in its time, and is still in our time, so resistant to clarification. Whitman had some admiring readers from the beginning, notably Emerson, but they were few in number for a poet who claimed to belong to everyone and said that he wished to absorb America and to be absorbed by it. It wasn't that Americans ignored American poets. Reynolds records the fact that while the first edition of *Leaves of Grass* met with mixed reviews and sold fewer than 100 copies, Longfellow's *Hiawatha* published the same year sold 10,000 in its first month, a figure that rose to 30,000 in the next six months.

One reason for this disparity is that Whitman's poems at their best were not, in what they have to impart,

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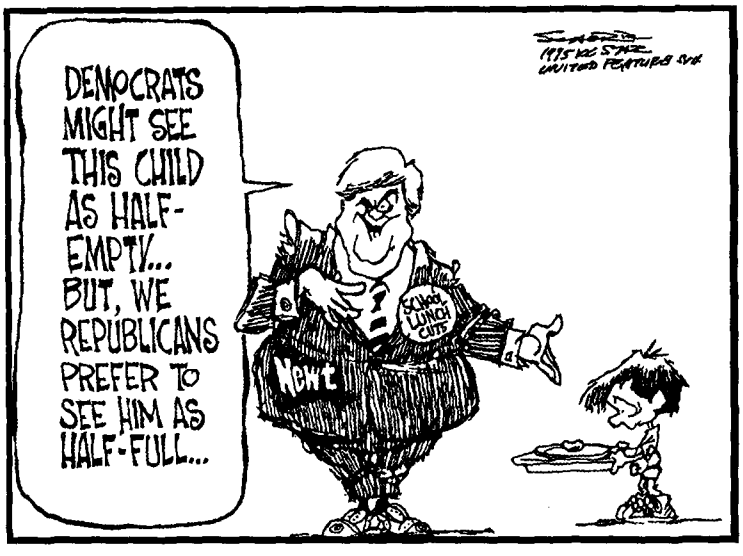
easily available to a culture, then or now, for which he imagined he was writing and, out of which, if one is to believe culturalist readers like Reynolds, he developed. Eventually he became a legendary national figure, helped along (as Frost was later to be helped along) by English admirers. How to explain the phenomenon that so great and difficult a writer did become legendary in America? It does not mean in the least that the writings themselves are widely read, much less understood. Gertrude Stein, a grateful and shrewd admirer of Whitman, remarked during her triumphant American tour in 1936 that enthusiastic audiences turned out to see her and listen to her readings not because of any work of hers that the audiences did understand, but because of the famous work of hers that they didn't understand; they were interested in her because they couldn't forget and couldn't figure out something as simple-sounding as "a rose is a rose is a rose."

The discipline of cultural and literary criticism, even if it is practiced as skillfully as it is by Reynolds, is the discipline of the collector. It requires the gathering of writings meant to explain the significance of works of literature that provide incentives to the inquiry, such as *Leaves of Grass*. In such an exercise, it is taken for granted that all the writings thus assembled, canonical and journalistic, are on the same track, that they share in the same "discourses," vocabularies and assumptions, allowing for considerable differences in style and formulation. That such evidence is available goes without saying, since a literary work, no matter how recondite, must always use some version of the language already understood by its readers. It isn't surprising, therefore, that Emerson, a most difficult American writer who also expected to be a popular one, should offer as lucid a rationale for cultural-literary or New Historicist criticism as it is likely to get. In his essay "Art," he remarks that

> No man can quite exclude the element of necessity from his labor. No man can quite emancipate himself from his age and country, or produce a model in which the education, the religion, the politics shall have no share. Though he were never so original, never so willful and fantastic, he cannot wipe out of his work every trace of the thoughts amidst which it grew. The very avoidance betrays the usage he avoids.

In one of her many Emersonian moments, even the outrageous Miss Stein concedes that no writer can invent new languages: "So every one must stay with the language their language that has come to be spoken and written and which has in it all of intellectual recreation." You are necessarily stuck, she is saying, with the inheritance of language. You can recreate it, though, and look for evidences within it of its having been recreated before, and many times, by still other writers. So that while any poet must use a language others have used, including the language found in one's own earlier writings, this immediately ceases to be a burden, since there is also to be discovered in language an inherent power to recreate and to transform it, to make it do new things.

Nothing, according to Whitman in the 1855 preface, exists only in its own moment: "No result exists now without its being from its long antecedent result and that from its antecedent, and so backward without the farthest mentionable spot coming a bit nearer the beginning than any other spot." Readers of Whitman are always surprised to discover how conservative he can sound, and when, later on in the preface, he speaks of that antecedent result which is the English language, it is without any of the nationalistic or insular bluster that is popularly associated with him. "The English language befriends the grand American expression," he says, and he calls it "the powerful language of resistance ... it is the dialect of common



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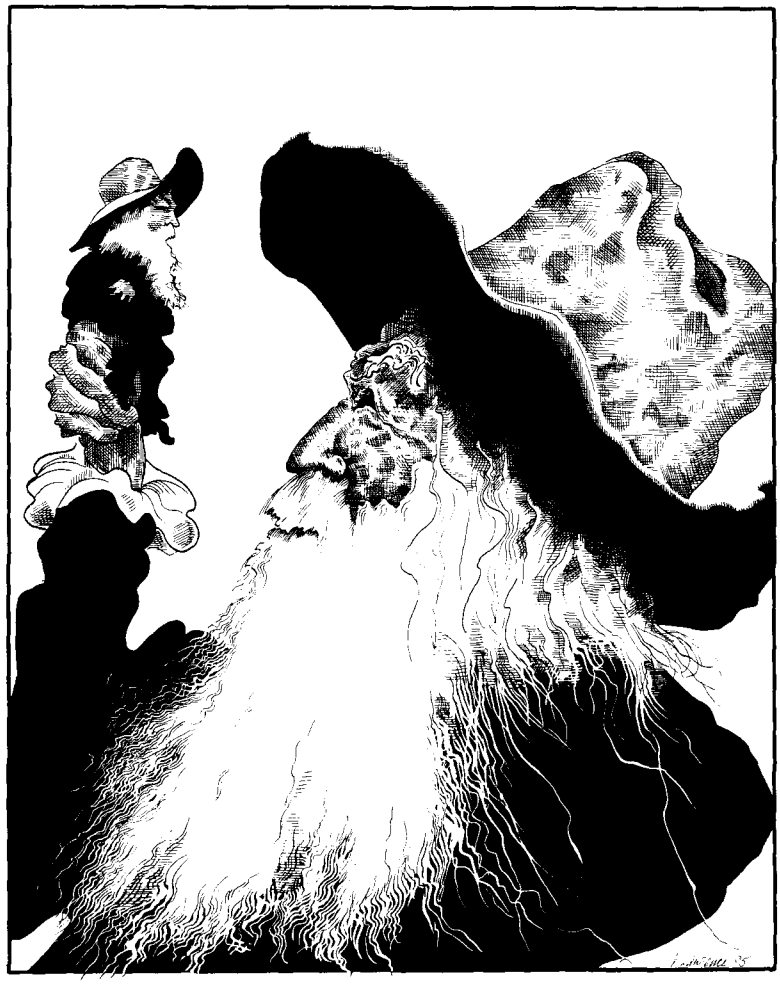
sense. It is the speech of proud and melancholy races and of all who aspire."

Occasional venerations of the past in Whitman aren't to be understood as venerations of objects or texts created in the past. The value of a literary classic has far less to do with any abstractable meanings, than with the discoverable traces of the actual work of writing that went into its creation. What is to be admired is the inferable and exemplary compositional enterprise more than the finished composition itself, an enterprise that continues in the form of later revisions and interpretations. In this sense, Emerson in 1844 was already speaking for the Whitman of 1855, and also thereafter when he said that "our poetry, our language itself are not satisfactions but suggestions," and earlier, too, in 1841, when he said that "the real value of the Iliad, or the Transfiguration, is as signs of power, tokens"—a favorite word of Whitman's for his poems—"of the everlasting effort to produce, which even in its worst estate the soul betrays."

The Emersonian imagination—and, later in the century, the pragmatist imagination—of poetry is one wherein Whitman, with the first *Leaves of Grass*, immediately takes a predominant place. From that moment to the present, this huge gathering of poems has proved immensely difficult, for the reason that Whitman places at its core the veritable drama of its making, the problems that attend the coming into being of a work that is in this instance without any apparent origin or license other than his own voice, a voice now exuberant, now embattled, sometimes defeated. "My voice," he says, "goes after what my eyes cannot reach." This incessant "going after," this will to figuration, as some would call it, moves some of his best poems off any position of rest they even temporarily offer themselves or the reader. *Leaves of Grass* is incessantly revising, amputating, adding to what it has done, disowning its metaphors even as these begin to shape themselves into a design, while the figure of Whitman in that complex of poems will characteristically embrace his lovers only when he is leaving them.

Whitman is a poet much given to abandonment, however frequently he wishes to be thought of as the poet of absorption. Each of these activities gives way to the other, often so precipitously that the speaker is caught off guard, seems no longer in control of the process, but filled suddenly with surprise or interrogation or consternation: "Is this then a touch? quivering me to a new identity" or "O Christ! My fit is mastering me!" or "I discover myself on the verge of the usual mistake" or "My lovers suffocate me!"



WALT WHITMAN BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Whitman's poetry, anyone's poetry, will naturally lend itself to biographical speculations, but it also manages to discourage speculations when they threaten to become overly specific or particular, especially with respect to something as private as sexual practices. This is notably the case with Whitman even while he suspensefully pretends that it's not going to be. Thus, the disruptive gestures that at times punctuate many of his poems, the frequent interplay between passionate engagement and abrupt disengagement, might encourage a reader, as it appears to have encouraged Symons, to believe that Whitman is communicating something about "athletic friendship" while not daring to speak its name. But any such inference is thickly hedged round by still others, having to do, say, with claims as to the poet's ardent relationship to anyone holding his book, so that finally we are not able to speak in these matters any more directly than Whitman himself chooses to do. Obviously we can say that he cherished the spectacle of the Manhattan streets, and I would say also that he entered those streets partly on the sexual prowl, which occupied him no less on the Brooklyn ferry, in Pfaff's underground restaurant and saloon located at Broadway just north of Bleeker, and in the street cars. It was there that he met a conductor named Peter Doyle, whose intimacy with Whitman lasted longest of the many in the poet's roster of semi-literate, working-class young men, most of whom, but not Doyle, went on to get married.

As I read the letters and the notebooks, Whitman cruised in search of new camarados with vigorous regularity, and the notebooks for the 1850s, 1870s and 1880s lists many dozens of young men not otherwise identified. Paul Zweig, in the biography that most recently preceded Reynolds's book, asks incredulously, "Were these men Whitman's lovers? Possibly, but so many?" Why not hope that he had most or all of them, since in that case he would be less likely to find himself immobilized with any one of them as a lover. Like most of Whitman's biographers, Zweig prefers to believe that if Whitman ever did go to bed with men, it was only on a very few occasions, and that these "were not happy experiences." Really? How can we know? Or is it to be assumed that such experiences cannot, or should not, be happy ones?

Even while Reynolds is prepared to believe—for good enough reasons, it seems to me—that in 1841, while teaching school in Southport, Long Island, Whitman may have been tarred, feathered and ridden out of town on a rail for sodomizing one of his male students, he nevertheless leans toward the view that

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the poet was more homoerotic than homosexual. This quibble is another instance, I suspect, of how the culturalist biographical method dictates rather than validates its findings. Like many another academic these days, Reynolds is overawed by the idea that it is enormously important that "homosexuality" and "heterosexuality" are terms of relatively recent invention. This leads to the assumption, as fallacious as it is widespread, that prejudice against "homosexuals" was markedly less in evidence before they were classified as such late in the last century.

Still, it is preposterous to maintain that a phenomenon such as homosexuality and the prejudice against it has ever waited upon any particular classification. The convenience of believing otherwise is that the belief promotes a further one, which is that homoeroticism met with far more tolerance in earlier times, like 1855, than it does now, presumably because folks were blissfully ignorant of the unspeakable acts to which it might lead. Meanwhile, back on planet earth, any observer of the advertisements for male underwear that adorn billboards and buses, or the televised goings on at the breaks in football games or at the end of other sporting events, knows that homoeroticism in public is having a very good year, at least as good a year as it ever has had, and that this in no way means that the public is ever likely to condone consummation in the dressing rooms or the locker rooms. Homosexuality, earlier known as sodomy or "the great sin against nature," was punishable by death well into the eighteenth century, while homoeroticism was supposedly in full sway, as Foucault (who is partly responsible for some of these historicist perpetrations) acknowledges.

But this is a digression from my primary concern, which is Whitman's poetry. The digression is made necessary by the large-scale ones on the same subject, running to chapters of books and books in their entirety, that have vitiated many a discussion of this, the greatest poet ever to appear in the United States. It is not possible to argue on the basis of Whitman's poetry that he was or was not a homosexual, though it is evident to me from his notebooks and his letters that he was a homosexual, and from the patterns of his personal relationships. Poetry is metaphor, and it can offer none of what Iago derisively calls "ocular proof" of anyone's sexual conduct; poetry is sound, and it is vain to listen to it for audible proof of anyone's sexual conduct. And yet the issue of Whitman's sexuality has been made so central to considerations of him that even some distinguished critics, who would otherwise scorn and deride interpretations of poetry that treated it as a species of sexually specific self-revelation, repeatedly turn to *Leaves of Grass* as if something close to revelation could be found there.

So what if the poem likens itself to "his seminal muscle," or, as in "Spontaneous Me," he refers to "This poem drooping shy and unseen that I always carry and that all men carry." The penis as poem is a conceit found in a lot of poems; poetic inspiration, on bad days, can be imagined as a shriveled penis in the work of Whitman, but it appears also in the works of Wallace Stevens. Which brings to mind, too, that Stevens's dedication "To Henry Church" of "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction" is immediately followed by a stanza beginning, "And what, except for you, do I feel love?" Stevens is in no degree homosexual; the feelings he is expressing are directed toward what in another poem he calls his "interior paramour," the muse of his poetry, embodied for him, in Whitmanian fashion, in a book that he says he is able to "press.... Close to me, hidden in me day and night." "Who touches this touches a man."

I agree that what can be gleaned from Whitman's letters and notebooks about his wariness of any too committed an attachment to such young men as Peter Doyle or Harry Stafford does indeed lend an autobiographical dimension to the repeated abruptions that occur in the poetry. And yet the same maneuvers are a crucial feature of Emerson's essays. They are his way of abandoning positions and formulations on which he has for a paragraph or two become overly dependent. "The way of life is wonderful," Emerson says in "Circles," "it is by abandonment."

Thus it is that a poetic figure or a stylistic movement that in Whitman's poetry can be adduced in support of contentions about his homosexuality can also be shown to have no such connotations whatever when they occur in writers closely allied to him who are not homosexual. Emerson was not homosexual any more than was Stevens. He gives little evidence even of homoeroticism, although when he was a 17-year-old at Harvard he confessed in his journals to an infatuation with another boy in the freshman class. There was an exchange of stares over many months, an exchange of a few words, but beyond that he speaks of their being "entirely unacquainted" and, while in the final entry on the subject he admits to "being agreeably excited by the features of [this] individual," he then adds, that the individual was "personally unknown to me." This is hardly enough to justify Reynolds's decision to include this

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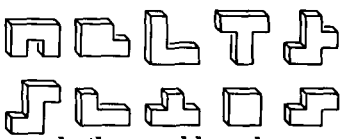

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touching little episode in a list of what he calls "intense male pairings" confessed to by notable American men in the early nineteenth century. Maybe the freshman's name—Martin Gay—proved an irresistible inducement. This, it is fair to point out, is only one incidental reference to Emerson among the many more extensive ones in Reynolds's book, but it is nonetheless indicative of how little of importance he finds to say about the connections between the two writers.

Documentary evidence of the connections between Emerson and Whitman is easy enough to come by, and Reynolds calls attention to a lot of it. But his citations remain at the level of gossip, because they are never informed by any intense interpretations of the writings themselves. This is a deficiency that Reynolds has in common with most cultural biographers, whose flat-minded understanding of the workings of literary language persuades them that close analysis is unnecessary, even assuming that they were able to undertake it. I hadn't supposed it was still necessary to insist on the deep affinities between Emerson and Whitman. Indeed, Whitman himself insists upon them, despite occasional disclaimers. His preface to the 1856 edition takes the form of a letter to Emerson; his advertisements for this and other printings eagerly exploit, without permission, Emerson's famous letter to him in 1855, which begins: "Dear Sir—I am not blind to the worth of the wonderful gift of *Leaves of Grass*. I find it the most extraordinary piece of wit and wisdom that America has yet contributed. I am very happy in reading it, as great power makes us happy."

Coming from a writer of immense international stature and addressed to a writer with no stature at all, someone Emerson had never met or heard of, this is among the most magnificently generous and clairvoyant endorsements of one writer by another in the history of literature. In failing to recognize the deep links between Emerson and Whitman, Reynolds, along with all the other biographers of Whitman and of Emerson, cannot go on to see how *Leaves of Grass*, from the very outset, in 1855, contextualizes itself within a tradition that extends not only to Thoreau close at hand but also to William James who frequently expressed his immense admiration for Whitman. And it extends, still later, to three great twentieth-century American writers, all of whom were at one time or another students at Harvard while James was a dominant figure in its philosophy department, Frost, Stein and Stevens.

These, along with Emerson, Thoreau and Whitman, are on the same road together, though frequently out of step, while the too easily acclaimed if sometimes appealing runts of the litter, like Ginsburg and Kerouac, trail behind. "I greet you at the beginning of a great career," wrote Emerson from the pinnacle to which his own career had taken him, "which yet must have had a long foreground somewhere, for such a start." These are the accents of one great man's self-exaltation, merited in this instance, as he accommodates another great man who has unexpectedly appeared on the scene. And yet, in the last half of the sentence, there's also, to my ears, a hint of inquisition in the tone, as if to ask if the "somewhere" of that "long foreground," isn't possibly discoverable in Emerson's own writing.

I have already alluded to some of the detailed evidence along this line, another important example of which is Emerson's mythologizing of the poet in relation to America, both to America as an idea possibly betrayed by the United States of America, and to America as a geographical space, a continental stretch still realizing itself westward. "America," Emerson says in 1844, "is a poem in our eyes." As in Whitman, it is a visionary possibility, a poem not yet finished. So, too, with the poet: he is in Emerson what he will later be in Whitman, a figure who can only be drastically reduced by any effort like Reynolds's to discover poetic identity only within historically measurable contexts. The poet in Emerson is the man "without impediment, who sees and handles what others dream of, traverses the whole scale of experience, and is representative of man, in virtue of being the largest power to receive and to impart." Emerson would have heard this poet in the first line of the volume Whitman had just sent him.

> I celebrate myself,
> And what I assume, you shall assume,
> And every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.

As imagined by Whitman in his prefaces, and especially in the poems before the Civil War, the poet is as much a mythological figure, and therefore as undependable a source of autobiographical confession, as he is in Emerson's essays, or in the writings of Wordsworth or Shelley, or in Sir Philip Sidney's *Apologie for Poetrie*. As all of these texts conceive of him, the poet is a "maker" in the archaic sense of the term; he is himself a God, capable of creating a new or second nature.

Whitman inherits nothing that he does not change, however, and his poetry is conjoined, very early in "Song of Myself," with Whitman's unique invention of himself in tripartite form: "my self," "my soul" and the "real Me." The poet in Whitman thus can become uncommonly beset by doubts as to his mission and his capacity to fulfill it. The very existence of the "real Me," in its disdainful aloofness, casts doubt upon the poet's poetic achievements, and like some terrifying, retributive in-law is capable at any time of disrupting the creative intercourse between "my self" and "my soul." It is Whitman's choice, of course, to create this conflict to begin with. It is the impetus for some of his most intricately conceived and emotionally wrenching poems, including "Song of Myself," which is not at all the uninterrupted "celebration" it is usually made out to be, "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry," "The Sleepers," "As I Ebb'd with the Ocean of Life," "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" and, less often included in such lists, some of the poems in Calamus, especially "Scented Herbage of My Breast," "Whoever You are Holding Me Now in Hand" (which in every respect anticipates Stevens's "The Rock") and the infinitely gentle purposefulness of "The Last Invocation," first printed in 1868.

Whitman's misleading and often mendacious self-promotions of himself as America's public poet, intelligently enough recounted by Reynolds, along with his posturings as a celebrant of the nation, even when, as in the poem "Respondez!," he could write of it with unmodulated bitterness, and his celebration of himself as one of the indefatigably gregarious "roughs"—all this so far succeeds that his poetry is still widely understood to be rather stridently simple. In fact, he exhibits a density of feeling and language not exceeded in the poetry of Emily Dickinson or the novels of Henry James, or by T. S. Eliot's self-declared "difficulty." Perhaps he had it coming to him when a scholar as intelligent as Symons could be led to ask if the Whitman of Calamus and the Whitman living in Camden, New Jersey weren't really one and the same, making out with the boys in the one place as he seemed admittedly to have done in the other.

While posing as the poet of democracy, Whitman is, even in that role, among the most elusive and the foxiest and the most manipulative of American writers, which is saying a good deal. The recurrent reminders in his poetry, and in his promotional writings about his poetry, that what you get is what you

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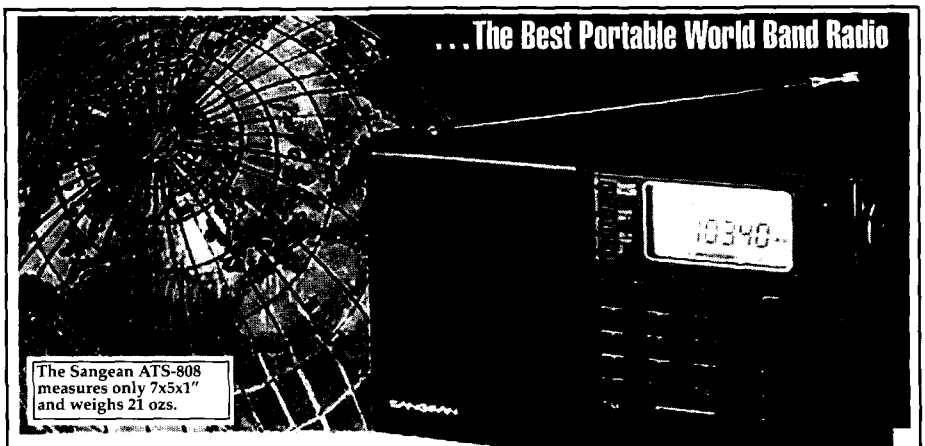
see—Walt Whitman, American—have always stimulated in readers a natural tendency to reduce any hard-going poetry to something more manageable. Whitman knew that, and he knew also that the posturing was essential to the success of his entire poetic project, requiring great audacity of calculation. First of all, he induces in the reader the belief that the poem is in important respects a true representation of a representative life, of the flesh and blood Walt. He then willingly tolerates the consequent misunderstandings, to the extent that in the case of Symons he didn't even try to clear them up for more than eighteen years and, when he does get round to it, he first dismisses these "morbid inferences," goes on to tell a real whopper of a lie, and then ingeniously tries to verify it on the spot by pretending to have written without any premeditation.

Whitman's answers to any of the questions about himself occasioned by his poetry are always evasive, if not false. He prompts such queries as those made by Symons and by generations of readers since, but his response consists only in raising more questions. Questions are finally all we are left with, which is all we are left with by most great poetry. What regularly appear to be literalizations and identifications ("I was there") eventually drive the reader back toward a recognition of the metaphoric status of his words; Whitman forces the reader back into his metaphors, back into the poetry-as-poetry and away from it as historical representation. And once we get there, into the poetry, cultural biography or cultural study of the kind now being practiced turns out to be less than helpful. Whitman contrives that his poetry will at last hold each of us, all alone in his grasp.

Speaking of which, I note that one of Whitman's tart and most telling comments on Symons is missing from Reynolds's book. In 1890, when he received a copy of Symons's essay "Democratic Art, with Special Reference to Walt Whitman," the old poet is reported by Horace Traubel to have remarked, "I doubt whether he has gripped 'democratic art' by the nuts, or L. of G. either." Women readers, who in the nineteenth century were the staunchest defenders of L. of G. against charges of indecency, need not feel left out. After all, it's only a figure of speech.

RICHARD POIRIER is the editor of *Raritan Quarterly* and the author most recently of *Pragmatism and Poetry* (Harvard University Press).



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States of Denial

By Nader Mousavizadeh

The Wages of Guilt: Memories of War in Germany and Japan by Ian Buruma

(Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 330 pp., $25)

For the Germans and the Japanese of the generations after the Second World War, the memories of war and defeat have been internalized as burdens of identity. But they have not been internalized in the same way. And this difference has had as much to do with how the world has projected that burden as with how those societies themselves have sought to cope with it. For the world, as well as for the vanquished in that war, the object of overcoming remains elusive, and the questions of closure as difficult to resolve as ever. When has a nation paid the price for aggression? What is the historical limit of historical guilt? Can an entire nation be held responsible for the criminal acts of its leaders? And if so, how is that nation to atone for the evil done in its name?

These are among the questions quietly pondered these days by the silent celebrants of the fiftieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War. They are celebrating, the Germans and the Japanese, because the end of the war was a liberation for them, too; but they are celebrating in silence, because speaking at all runs the risk of moral tastelessness. In his new book, Ian Buruma probes the sources of that outer silence and the inner turmoil that it conceals. His subject is the psychological debris of historical remembrance; and while his fine book reads like a travelogue, the destinations acutely rendered are the national identities of two peoples at war with the past.

For this difficult journey, Buruma is an ideal guide. He grew up in a small Dutch town in the aftermath of German occupation, and he is one of the most incisive students of Asia writing in English. Over several months in 1991 and 1992, Buruma visited museums and monuments in Germany and Japan, spoke to politicians, museum curators, intellectuals and dissidents, officials and citizens, asking about their memories of the war. He recounts the respective public debates about the war in clear, almost clinical prose, setting out the opposing sides in the battle for the memories of the future. For that is what is taking place between the revisionists and the liberals in Germany and Japan: a battle for the view of the war that will inscribe itself on the minds of generations still to come.

The Wages of Guilt is arranged in alternating chapters about Germany and Japan, with Buruma occasionally comparing monuments or debates, and rarely passing judgment on the rectitude of remembrance. He states early on that one object of his account is to evaluate the conventional wisdom on how the two countries see the war: that the Germans have gone to extraordinary lengths to face the evil of their Nazi past, while the Japanese refuse to accept any blame for the war and prefer to see themselves as victims of "the worst sin committed in the twentieth century," as one liberal-minded Japanese intellectual describes the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The testimony of his book does little to alter this conception. In many ways, it confirms the worst stereotypes about Japanese historiography, and in more complicated ways supports the belief that Germany has found a way to live honestly with its past.

The Japanese portrayed in *The Wages of Guilt* do not seem even to be talking about the same war. To hear it from the vast majority of those in Tokyo and Hiroshima with whom Buruma spoke, the Pacific War was a struggle of the valiant and brave Japanese for national survival, and for the liberation of Asia from Western colonialism. The Japanese armies committed no atrocities greater than those common to all wars. The Rape of Nanking is a fiction devised by Westerners and Chinese seeking to undermine the honor of the Japanese war effort. And Hiroshima is equaled only by Auschwitz in the annals of evil. In this account, the Enola Gay absolved Japan of any status other than victim. In the pantheon of comparative victimology, Japan reigns supreme.

Buruma is careful not to dismiss the increasingly absurd narratives with which he is presented. He wants rather to explore their consequences for Japanese politics and Japanese culture. And he is also mindful of including the views of those for whom Japan's history is slightly more textured, and who acknowledge its wartime crimes and peacetime lies. "The Japanese people do not trust the self-defense forces," a government official tells Buruma, addressing Japan's constitutional promise to renounce war as a right, "because they cannot trust themselves as Japanese. This is why they need the constitution to block security efforts." That this is the minority view is made manifestly clear by Buruma's painstaking interest in the dissenters and the ostracism that they have faced at every turn.

Nowhere can the dissonance between myth and reality in Japanese historiography be gauged better than in the treatment of Nanking and Hiroshima as equal emblems of victimhood. Nanking is the great accusation, Hiroshima the great atrocity. The Rape of Nanking took place in December 1937, when Japanese troops after months of hard fighting captured their greatest prize, the capital city. Over a period of almost two months, Japanese soldiers raped and murdered in an orgy of violence, killing between 200,000 and 300,000 men, women and children. The sheer savagery of this assault is difficult to convey, though no method of murder seems to have gone unexplored. This is how a typical Japanese textbook describes the "event": "In December [1937] Japanese troops occupied Nanking." A footnote (a *footnote*) is added: "At this time Japanese troops were reported to have killed many Chinese, including civilians, and Japan was the target of international criticism."

It does not seem an overly anxious comparison to wonder how the world would react if German textbooks read as follows: "During the war, Germany occupied Poland," adding in a footnote that "German officers were reported to have interned and killed many Jews, and Germany was the target of international criticism." Of course, as Buruma details at length, the conquest of Nanking was a part of a military campaign, not an end in itself; but the elimination of Nanking from modern memory seems no less surreal and ugly than the more familiar forms of Holocaust denial. And the denial does not end there. When Ishiharo Shintaro, a popular politician and author of the recent chauvinist classic *The Japan That Can Say "No"*, was

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asked in an interview about the massacre, he called it "a lie," "a story made up by the Chinese" as part of a campaign by "aliens and alien countries, who use history for the sake of propaganda."

It would be comforting to believe that the Japanese abuse of memory is simply an excess of extreme conservative revisionists. But it is among the liberals and the leftists, the pacifists and the modernizers, that the obsession with Hiroshima rules, and in this grim fact Buruma finds the most damning testament to Japan's political immaturity. From the ruins of that most ghastly act of war, the Japanese have built a new ethic of innocence, a primal virtue of victimhood that admits of no guilt, and that, in Buruma's phrase, dissolves Japanese sins in the sins of mankind. It is the argument to end all arguments. And so Hiroshima teaches not the costs of aggression or militarism, but a puerile pacifism that suffers criticism of Japan only as part of a condemnation of war in all its forms.

Thus Japan is transformed into the martyr and the missionary of the modern world, and the Japanese become the unique victims of nuclear war and universal apostles of peace. There is little room in this construction for moral or historical nuance. The slightest doubt can topple the entire artifice. The faintest hint of guilt becomes a mortal wound. And this is one of Buruma's real insights: in Japan there occurred no clean break, no "Zero Hour," as the Germans somewhat sunnily call their own postwar beginning. This political continuity, perfectly represented by the unbroken reign of Hirohito as emperor, insured that "a defense of Japanese identity often *is* a defense of the old regime."

The story of Ienaga Saburo is instructive about the tenacity with which the past is bound up with the present in Japanese history. Ienaga is the author of a widely used history textbook which, soon after its publication in 1952, was censored by the government for being too "one-sided." His crime was to note the Nanking massacre, and to mention the rapes and the medical experiments by Japanese soldiers in Manchuria. He appealed to the courts for freedom of expression, and he was still appealing his case when Buruma visited him in 1992. Consider Ienaga's use of the term "aggression" to describe Japan's war in China. The ministry of education's censors found the word, well, unflattering, and made the following suggestion:

> Aggression is a term that contains negative ethical connotations. In the education of the citizens of the next generation it is not desirable to use a term with such negative implications to describe the acts of our own country. Therefore an expression such as "military advance" should be taken up.

"The suggestion," as Buruma dryly notes, "was duly taken up."

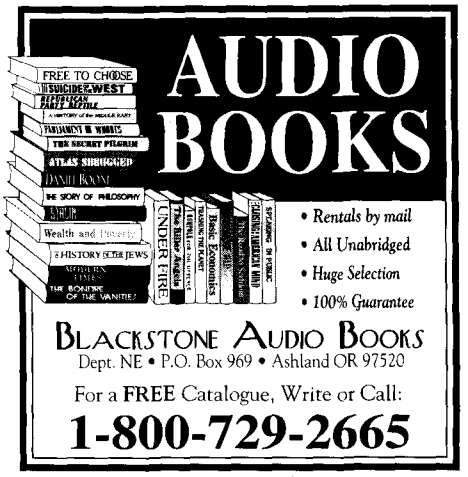
A historian such as Ienaga had no choice but to comply, and Buruma suggests another reason for the lack of criticism in Japanese literature: the institutional absence of independent thought and scholarship about the war. "[T]here are very few modern historians in Japan. Until the end of the war, it would have been dangerously subversive, even blasphemous, for a critical scholar to write about modern history. The emperor system, after all, was sacred.... And even now, modern history is considered by senior historians to be something best left to journalists." Alas, history, in these hands, has become a tired drill of half-baked excuses and marginal explanations, all in the service of the Japanese nation, pure and brave and exemplary, and bound only by bonds of occupation to a Western culture from which nothing can be learned.

Revisionism and resentment, the twin sentiments of a nation still uneasy with its past are in evidence in Germany as in Japan, and yet there is a vast gulf separating the agony of the Germans from the apostasy of the Japanese. It is largely a gulf between truth and falsehood. This is not to say that there aren't Germans who wish for a different resolution to the issue of war-guilt. In one of the most illuminating chapters of his book, Buruma tells the story of the young Richard von Weizsäcker, who appeared at the Nuremberg trials in defense of his father, who had been the chief civil servant of Hitler's foreign ministry:

> He is said to have turned to a friend and to have remarked, in his best Wehrmacht officer style, that they should storm the court and release the prisoners. The friend, rather astonished, asked why on earth they should do such a thing. "So that we can try them ourselves."

Apocryphal though it may be, this story reveals the intricate and inextricable links between pride and penance in Weizsäcker's—and Germany's—labor of remembrance. About the fact that the young Weizsäcker truly wanted a trial, a German trial, at which the Nazi leaders could be found guilty and sentenced, there can be no doubt. If Ienaga Saburo's story is emblematic of the absence of Japanese war guilt, Richard von Weizsäcker's story is emblematic of how resolutely, and how painfully, official Germany has accepted its burden for the Nazi crimes.

The image of the son condemning *and* defending the father is an apposite metaphor for Germany's struggle with its past. With two qualifications, however. Weizsäcker's father was not a Nazi and he played no part in the Final Solution. And more importantly, as president of the Federal Republic for ten years, Weizsäcker confronted rather than evaded the hardest questions of what and when the Germans knew of the unspeakable crime committed in their name. In his epochal speech to the German Parliament on the fortieth anniversary of the end of the war, a speech that remains



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one of the most noblest confessions of modern history, Weizsäcker said:

> [W]ith every day something became clearer, and this must be stated on behalf of all of us today: May 8 was a day of liberation. It liberated all of us from the inhumanity and the tyranny of the National Socialist Regime.... Today we mourn all the dead of the war and the tyranny. In particular we commemorate the 6 million Jews who were murdered in German concentration camps.... Hitler had never concealed his hatred from the public but made the entire nation a tool of it.... Who could remain unsuspecting after the burning of the synagogues, the plundering, the stigmatization with the Star of David, the deprivation of rights, the ceaseless violation of human dignity? Whoever opened his eyes and ears and sought information could not fail to notice that Jews were being deported. There were many ways of not burdening one's conscience, of shunning responsibility, looking away, keeping mum. When the unspeakable truth of the Holocaust then became known at the end of the war, all too many of us claimed that they had not known anything about it or even suspected anything.... It is not a case of coming to terms with the past. That is not possible. It cannot be subsequently modified or made undone.... We must understand that there can be no reconciliation without remembrance.

Though he mentions Weizsäcker, Buruma does not dwell on this speech and, more curiously, discusses only in passing Germany's *Historikerstreit*, the historians' dispute that in the mid-1980s embroiled Germany's leading intellectuals in a debate over the uniqueness of the Holocaust. This omission is owed, perhaps, to Buruma's preference for cinematic and anecdotal evidence. He focuses on Germany's "inability to mourn," a concept popular among psychologists of the 1960s and 1970s, on the differences between remembrance in the GDR and the Federal Republic, and on the role of monuments in maintenance of memory. But as Buruma himself makes abundantly clear in his accounts of Japan, it is precisely among the historians that the most influential battles over memory are fought. An account of German remembrance that ignores those same battles, particularly since they have played a much greater role in German political and intellectual life, is not only disappointing on its own terms. It also contributes to a sense of optimism about Germany's struggle with history that is not entirely justified. After all, as recently as a few weeks ago, the questions posed by the *Historikerstreit* were resurrected by German conservatives concerned with the "one-sided" nature of the anniversary celebrations of V-E Day.

Originating in a discussion about the uniqueness of the Holocaust, the *Historikerstreit* grew to encompass a definition of the Nazi era's place in world history—whether it should be seen in context, compared and contrasted, relativized, in short, or whether it must be seen as a singular, unprecedented and inimitable act of human cruelty. Those who sought to lessen Germany's burden advanced strategic justifications for Hitler's expansionist foreign policy, and offered the excuse of self-defense against Stalin's "Asiatic Barbarism" for the extermination of the Jews. Among the revisionists in the debate, Michael Stürmer, a historian then serving as Helmut Kohl's "historical adviser," offered a revealing explanation for the debate:

> Loss of orientation and the search for identity are brothers. But anyone who believes that this has no effect on politics and the future ignores the fact that in a land without history whoever supplies memory, shapes concepts, and interprets the past will win the future.

It is a common conceit—not only of the right but also of the left—that there is such a thing as "a land without history." For both sides in the debate, this innocence of history permits the illusion that the postwar beginning not only represented political renewal, but also created a void of culture that demanded a narrative. While a "Zero Hour" of sorts did take place in (West) Germany with the founding of a liberal, Atlantic constitutional ethos—what may be called a *Drang nach Westen*—it did not make the Nazi era any more or less a part of German history. And this is a dilemma for both revisionists and liberals, neither of whom will have anything to do with the German past as it was.

The left wants to relieve modern Germany of its ties to tradition, to rely instead on what Jürgen Habermas has called "constitutional patriotism." This is the common, careful hope of good liberals throughout Europe that a civic nationalism of social affiliation rather than ethnic allegiance can banish the ghosts of the past and anchor modern citizenship in a democratic spirit. The past thus becomes merely an evolutionary stage from which the present has developed, and with which it has nothing in common.

The right will have none of this escape from the national self, and is equally unwilling to treat the past as a "secular" matter, to use Buruma's term. If the Nazi era is but one of many forms of totalitarianism in our century, if its crimes are common to all aggressive nations, then "Zero Hour"—the total rejection of Germany's fascist past at the end of the war—becomes a moment of simultaneous "liberation and annihilation." This was the premise of a letter titled "Against Forgetting" recently published in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and signed by more than 300 leading conservatives. Seeking a "nationalism of normality," these writers and politicians seek a different kind of remembrance than that commonly associated with the Nazi era. What ought to be commemorated on May 8, they said, was the "expulsion by terror, oppression in the East, and the partition of our country," insisting that "a view of history that ignores or represses this reality, or that compares it to other realities cannot be the basis for the self-understanding of a self-confident nation." Again the battle for history, again the anxiety about the self-esteem of the eternal penitent.

If this begins to sound eerily similar to the pronouncements of Japanese revisionists, one must still recognize that the nationalists of normality are in the minority, that their views in no way dominate Germany's interpretation of the past. What is more troublesome, in a society not quite comfortable with a wholly secular identity, is the naïveté on the part of the left and the liberals, those for whom the criminals were criminals and remembrance is the hope for forgiveness. For they are staking the future on the power of materialism to replace myth, and society to overcome community. This has been the hope of all liberals when faced with the furies of nationalism: that its tribal appeals could be harnessed and its excitements disarmed by the quotidian comforts of the modern welfare state.

This is not an altogether illusory vision, and it has the been the quiet achievement of European liberalism to have kept its efforts at internationalism one step ahead of a nationalist backlash. But it has done so with careful attention to the need for national identity and singularity, avoiding the temptation to banish or to delegitimate heterogeneity altogether. The cosmopolitan Buruma counts himself proudly among the civic nationalists ("I like the idea of constitutional patriotism"). And so, in embarrassment or in distaste, he insulates himself against the noises of nationalism, and looks elsewhere for German remembrance.

Buruma comes to the subject of German guilt with an empathy that is surprising for someone who grew up viewing the Germans as enemies.

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"When I say Germans," he observes, "I mean just that—not Nazis, but Germans." For him, the hypothetical dilemma is not one of complicity, but one of opposition. Would he have joined the Dutch resistance, or as he puts it, would he have acted like the frightened man who "betrayed to save his life. I fear I would be much like that frightened man myself. And partly because, to me, failure is more typical of the human condition than heroism."

Armed (or disarmed) with such a sensibility, Buruma approaches the horrors of German conduct during the war with a strange serenity. This is not to say that detachment isn't a necessary quality in a student of the Holocaust, or that Buruma's readiness to admit his fears of betrayal is a weakness. Still, this is a subject that demands, at the very least, engagement. And for anyone wishing to explore the "forest of German history," as Simon Schama has called it, aloofness is an inadequate armor. In a brilliant chapter on Anselm Kiefer in *Landscape and Memory*, Schama draws a distinction between "innocent scouts" and "woodland exorcists" among those who enter the forest of German history. The innocents are those for whom the myths of the German pasts are anathema, subjects only for closet fascists and irrational populists incapable of critical distance. Kiefer, by contrast, has braved the political furies and rejected the idea that Nazism was an "aberration" in the history of German militarist authoritarianism. Rather, "he forces together culturally acceptable elements of the German heroic and mythic tradition with its unacceptable historical consequences." He has embraced, rather than fled, the dark and mythic roots of German culture in order to repudiate them.

But Kiefer's brave and proper path is not available to those children of the Enlightenment whose fear of the forces of belonging leaves them helpless before those forces when they appear, as they do again and again, to embarrass a shallow rationalism. Schama asks pointedly if there is a way of taking myth seriously without being taken in, if it is not too dangerous to leave myth to those for whom myth is the only reality:

> So how much myth is good for us? And how can we measure the dosage? Should we avoid the stuff altogether for fear of contamination or dismiss it out of hand as sinister and irrational esoterica...? Or do we have to ensure that a *cordon sanitaire* of protective irony is always securely in place when discussing such matters?

"A *cordon sanitaire* of protective irony" is a good description of Buruma's tone in his otherwise important book. There is, in Buruma's prose, a drive to deflate, a wish to expose false symbols, an intolerance of inherited dreams and ideals. It is, at its best, a search for moral and ethical precision, but it results, too often, in precision without spirit. Memory, history, a nation's collective consciousness are all intangibles of identity, intangibles not easily reduced to a peripheral place in the construct of civic nationalism.

The idea that "constitutional patriotism" will suffice to sustain groups or individuals is an illusion. Identity may be a danger, but spiritually and historically it is an inevitable danger. And the liberalism without soul will be the liberalism most vulnerable to those for whom soul is everything. •

The Power of Balance

BY LAWRENCE FREEDMAN

On the Origins of War and the Preservation of Peace by Donald Kagan

(Doubleday, 606 pp., $30)

The study of international affairs, always animated by the fear of war, has been dominated by two schools of thought. The traditional approach focuses on the "balance of power," which relies on one set of great powers, with an interest in the status quo, checking the other powers with radical, hegemonic ambitions; as great powers rise and fall, there must be constant attention to the balance if it is not to get dangerously out of kilter. The other approach relies on international institutions, fortified by a sense of interdependence generated by economic and social linkages, which encourage a recognition that armed conflict is foolish and counterproductive. Once the institutions are firmly based and consolidated, they should be able to cope with changing circumstances. The balance of power school displays scant confidence in human nature; the internationalists are more optimistic. A balance of power depends on strong states; strong international institutions cut states down to size.

Donald Kagan follows the more traditional approach, and he opens his inquiry into the origins of war by warning those who believe in the obsolescence of war that such hopeful expectations have been made before and have never been warranted. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the virtues of commerce were proclaimed to extend beyond the mere production of wealth, and commerce, in the words of Mill, would "rapidly [render] war obsolete, by strengthening and multiplying the personal interests which act in natural opposition to it." Kagan notes how such hopes were dashed, even as the terrible destructiveness of war came to be better appreciated. The spread of commerce turns out, from Kagan's perspective, to be just another of the impersonal forces that are commonly identified as the cause of war—along with types of government (monarchy, military dictatorship) and types of relationships (imperial, antagonistic, cooperative). He concentrates on the willful acts of great powers and their leaders.

Kagan inclines toward explanations based on the presumption of a competition for power, which he defines simply as the capacity to bring about desired ends, good or bad. In contrast with the traditional realist perspective, however, he recognizes that the study of power cannot be considered separately from the ends which that power is intended to support. As a scholar who made his reputation with his studies of the *Peloponnesian War*, it is appropriate that Kagan takes his cue from Thucydides's observation that people go to war out of "honor, fear and interest." Fear and interest are unsurprising as motives for war, but honor is a novel motive, about which Kagan offers some new ideas. When considered as a synonym for fame and glory, honor may seem a tad old-fashioned, but think of it instead, he suggests, as "deference, esteem, just due, regard, respect or prestige."

> Honor, in these senses, is desirable in itself, but it also has practical importance in the

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competition for power. When it is on the wane, so, too, is the power of the state losing it, and the reverse is also true.

Kagan uses his case studies to demonstrate that often "some aspect of honor is decisive" while other considerations, such as material gain and an ambition for power itself play an unexpectedly small role.

But honor here has been given a rather broad meaning. Individuals or states might be honored for the good that they do or for their aura of power: because they do what is right or because they have proved their might. The distinction is important, for while doing what is right may lead to a sort of moral authority, this is often helpless against brute force. Those honored for their strength gain their authority by obliging others to acknowledge a capacity for brute force.

In this second sense, for those like Kagan who take balances of power seriously, honor refers to what might be called the half-life of power. Every exercise of power has two dimensions. The first is related to the matter at hand, and concerns the immediate interests at stake and the resources that are worth expending to secure those interests. The second dimension, what I call the half-life, concerns the implications of the management of the matter at hand for long-term power relationships. Put simply: If I give in now, will my enemy simply come back with more demands in the future, or will I at least have preserved my assets for another day? If I make a firm stand, will others be obliged to take me seriously or just consider me foolish for fighting against the odds?

This is not simply a question of honor. For the resources squandered in futile battles or the concessions that follow on defeat must also shape the capacity to exert power in the future. The half-life, the glow that shines from a famous victory, or that is dimmed by a humiliating defeat, continues to influence the calculations of others until the memory fades or is overtaken by further encounters. This glow is certainly less tangible than the proximate causes of war that often seem so trivial in the light of their costs. Still, its significance can be appreciated when the stakes of war are understood in terms of preserving or strengthening a position within a power structure, a position that is dependent on how others perceive the likely outcome of a confrontation as much as on the simple accumulation of resources.

Kagan insists upon sensitivity to the implications of apparently trivial encounters for an overall structure of power, and he explores his theme through an exercise in what he calls comparative narrative history. He considers the Peloponnesian War (431-404 B.C.), World War I (1914-18), the Second Punic War (218-202 B.C.), World War II (1939-45) and, slightly awkwardly, the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962. It should be said right away that this is a book worth reading for the quality of its case studies as much as for the quality of its thesis. Kagan is a master of the historian's art. He can move with facility between the wars of antiquity and the wars of the twentieth century, with narratives that are beautifully constructed and nimble in their use of sources, and that clarify important issues at each stage.

The basic lesson that Kagan wants to draw from his case studies is that the best guarantee of peace is the satisfaction of the preponderant power with the status quo, so that it is prepared to defend it against those looking to improve their position by aggressive means. This is hardly an original thesis, but Kagan offers a distinctive restatement. His analysis of the Peloponnesian War suggests that the problem did not result—as is commonly argued, following Thucydides—from Sparta's fear of Athenian expansion. The two were wary of each other, but they had come, with their allies, to a modus vivendi. The upset was caused by the allies, and in particular with Corinth's challenge to Corcyra. The Athenians could not ignore this, for it threatened to unbalance the whole system. Yet they didn't want war either, and so they were tentative, which led to uncertain signals that allowed the crisis to get out of hand. It would have been better, Kagan concludes, if the Athenians had been firm with the Corinthians right away. By and large, swift firmness with upstarts is Kagan's first prescription for a stable international system.

His second prescription is self-restraint among great powers. Bismarck exemplifies the qualities in a statesman that Kagan admires, at least in his conduct of Germany's external affairs. He understood that a dominant power must temper its own ambitions, if others are not to be alarmed and political order is to be sustained. When Kaiser Wilhelm ditched Bismarck, he was ditching a responsible foreign policy. The Kaiser's dissatisfaction with Germany's place in the world thereafter infused his every action. Britain, the power with the most to lose, could do little to mollify this ambition, yet it was unprepared to confront the implications. Again Kagan deplores tentativeness. In the end, both allies and adversaries were left confused, because Britain herself was confused. But this is not just the charge against Lord Grey's diplomacy of July and August 1914. Kagan is also indicting the established policy of accepting some responsibility for the balance of power in Europe but not the substantial standing army that would have imposed itself

Monument

(L.B., 1955–1979)

Of that year I remember the soft gauzy
whitish lump of goat cheese going bad

like some alchemical disaster turning day
to lead; the Cretan sun so much Minoan

bull-leapers' somersaulting glory; and you
looking down the long sluice of months

toward the metonymy of hospital walls,
gums dyeing your first Greek hours,

smearing the hope that brought you here
for one last fling at life. Recovering

from the flight, you pondered my room's
garish poster of Manhattan's skyline,

epic in blacks and whites. You caught flaws
in its silhouette only a native could,

seated before the memory of all you were.
What height had you risked, Lloyd, to come

from the bedridden gloom of Astoria, Queens,
just to face anachronistic splendor?—you

whose marrow I'd soon sift through fingers
on a hillside far from any possible future:

snow's soot on a Catskill lake, after our
palms patted the silvered seam of earth down.

Brian Culhane

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on the calculations of the German General Staff.

This reluctance to grasp the responsibilities of power, and the logic of power, emerges in his treatment of the Second Punic War. Kagan blames the Romans for provoking Carthage by pursuing "a policy that was both too hard and too soft, unclear, self-deceptive, and, therefore, dangerous." The follies of appeasement in the 1930s, on top of the mismanaged settlement of the First World War, have long been accepted as making World War II inevitable. Here Kagan provides an elegant version of an indictment that is habitually recalled whenever there is talk of any compromise with an aggressor.

The same tendencies are also shown to have been at work in Cuba. Kennedy failed to stand up to Khrushchev at the two leaders' summit in Vienna and then showed himself to be irresolute during the crises over the Bay of Pigs and Berlin, confirming the Soviet leader's image of this young playboy as inexperienced and vulnerable to intimidation. The problem was not that Khrushchev misunderstood the balance of power. He knew that it was shifting to America's advantage in the early 1960s. He hoped to use Kennedy's uncertain grasp of the possibilities of power to reverse this tendency, and Castro's desire to defend the Cuban revolution provided him with a pretext to increase the missile threat he could pose to the continental United States.

Kagan's portrait of Kennedy is harsh. But this is not the usual revisionist critique, not Kennedy the cold warrior accepting enormous risks of nuclear war in order to bully a small socialist neighbor and to deny the Soviet right to the same type of missile deployment around its periphery that the United States claimed around its own. The issue, for Kagan, is not moral equivalence, but a fundamental political struggle, in which neither values nor rules can be assumed to be shared. This is the hawk's criticism of Kennedy, a weak president inviting trouble by assuming that Khrushchev was playing the same game with the same fears of miscalculation.

Here Kagan makes a number of telling points. He correctly notes the consequences of Kennedy being the most dovish member of his own administration, always preferring to back away from a direct confrontation. The cost of such caution, as with appeasement, was that the confrontation, when it came, was more dangerous than it had to be. This may be true, but the remorseless character of Kagan's technique leads him to stress the importance of "honor as might" even when this comes at the expense of "honor as right." Kennedy understood the first type, and knew that his reputation could not stand further irresolution. It was true that he was prepared to make a trade, and that he was extremely cautious when it came to using force, but he remained constant on the central demand that the missiles be removed from Cuba. The question was what could be offered in return. A promise not to invade Cuba would have been difficult to withhold, and an invasion itself would have been an act of enormous folly, especially given what we know (but did not know then) about the strength of Cuban plus Soviet forces. Moscow was given advance notice that Jupiter missiles would be removed from Turkey, as a private sop to a public demand that had threatened a deal based on a non-invasion pledge. Had this promise been made public, the allies would have complained about their security being jeopardized to get Washington out of a jam. But this concession was kept secret at the time, and so Kennedy's wobbles had no lasting significance.

More importantly, and this is evidenced in all of Kennedy's foreign policy, he continually asked himself as a politician what public opinion would bear. Kennedy was aware of a popular reluctance to go to war, and he sensed that he would have to offer damn good arguments if he asked the American people for such a sacrifice. Allied access to West Berlin, maintaining anti-communist but corrupt regimes in Southeast Asia, preserving a small missile deployment in Turkey that he had anyway wanted to terminate: these may have been relevant to "honor as might," but surely they had nothing to do with "honor as right." Words for skeptical domestic and international audiences could not be found to justify the hawkish stands, and Kennedy the politician understood the importance of this shortcoming.

Kagan sees a liberal public opinion devoted to welfare programs as tending to undermine a responsible foreign policy, which must require sacrifice and risk if it is to be credible. But this leads him to postulate unrealistic policy options that would have been beyond the most prescient statesman. More could have been done by Britain in the years leading up to 1914 to clarify the commitment to France; but to have instituted a major departure in foreign policy on the basis of a speculative assessment of the long-term logic of the Kaiser's foreign policy overdoes the counterfactuals. The freedom to maneuver of an American president coping with anxious allies, and the overhanging threat of nuclear war, should not be exaggerated.

Kagan is correct when he warns that peace does not keep itself, that moments of international calm have never up to now precluded a resurgence of great power conflict, that those who want order and restraint have got to be prepared to fight for it. Reliance on institutions is not enough: those with expansive aims must know that they will be resisted. The message that a small determined action taken early can ensure that large and painful actions do not become necessary later on is always worth repeating, though it is always easier to appreciate in retrospect.

War remains endemic, and "honor, fear and interest" still play their part. But there have been important shifts in the nature of wars, and this must affect the relevance of the lessons that Kagan wishes to impart. The most important shift lies in the sheer proliferation of states. The bulk of modern wars do not directly affect the old great powers (though Russia is sensitive to events in and around its borders). The United States and its European allies have not yet sorted out what responsibilities they have for order and restraint in parts of the world where there is no threat to their strategic interests. And they have not yet sorted out the tolerance they should show to regional powers who do try to impose their own form of order. The problem for the United States and its European allies now is that they are often expected to intervene to do what is right rather than to pursue national interests.

So war may be endemic, but it is affected by the shifting patterns of international politics. Great powers are not driven by the same imperatives as before; they have little scope to expand and they have given up their colonies. The ambitions that led them into regular conflict have eased, even if these are now replicated among some of the smaller powers. The scope within which they can make decisions about war and peace has been tightened, with fateful actions requiring exceptional justification in terms of universal values as much as reasons of state. The constant factors that must inform the study of war are brilliantly illuminated by Kagan, but his method precludes him from analyzing trends rather than drawing lessons. The study of war cannot be complete without attention to the consequences of economic, political and social change.

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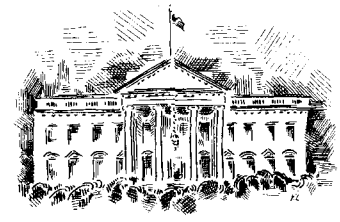
WASHINGTON DIARIST

Cheap thrill

THE THRILL IS GONE IN WASHINGton. Not for conservatives, of course. Cutting, reducing, slashing, paring or slowing the growth of government—this excites conservatives. But the thrill for everyone else in Washington comes from expanding government. The bigger the role for the federal government, the more power, prestige and money for the folks who work here. And not just the bureaucrats. As Washington has grown in recent decades and involved itself in all the nooks and crannies of American life, the permanent political class has metastasized: lobbyists, trade association reps, political consultants, lawyers, P.R. people, labor union officials, information brokers, journalists. Their livelihood depends on a large and active federal establishment in Washington. But, if the private sector outside the Beltway is given more discretion through deregulation, and if state and local governments take over functions now carried out in Washington, what good do these changes do the political class here? Answer: none. True, the devolution of government to places outside Washington should mean more work for lawyers, lobbyists and the rest in Sacramento, Columbus and Lansing. But how many are ready to trade the good life in Washington for a lucrative job in the hinterlands? Not a lot.

I'VE TRIED TO IMAGINE WHAT Washington would be like if people skipped town after their government work is done. You know, the way things used to be. Until thirty or forty years ago, House members and senators would leave when they were defeated or otherwise gave up their seats. So would officials of an administration that lost power. Now, everyone stays, or at least tries to. They join, yes, the permanent political class. But should Republicans succeed in thinning the federal government, the private job market in Washington would shrink and many would have to split. It would be poignant, I think, but good for democracy. When thousands of Democratic congressional staffers were thrown out of work by the GOP takeover, the press reported sympathetically about their plight, namely that they might have to go *elsewhere*. Well, it's not the end of the world, and turnover is good for representative government. With everyone staying, a political culture has developed in Washington that separates it from the rest of the country, like Paris in the eighteenth century and London and Beijing at various times in their histories. Send them home, I say. Washington won't become a sleepy Southern town again, but it might become less hectic, less clotted, less affluent, less full of itself, less aloof from America.

AS THRILLING AS WASHINGTON IS for conservatives in 1995, my guess is the rest of the 1990s won't be. Bill Bennett, the former drug czar who didn't leave town when his job ran out, says you're either on offense or defense in Washington. He's right, and conservatives are obviously on offense now. In fact, they're likely to achieve much of their agenda: deep spending cuts, elimination of a passel of agencies and a Cabinet department or two, moderately sweeping deregulation, massive shifting of federal programs to states. Having accomplished so much, they'll instantly be put on the defensive. Years like 1995, when the public is bent on cutting federal programs in practice as well as theory, are few and far between. Prior to 1995, the last year of cutting government was 1981. Before that, I don't remember. Anyway, the temptation to spend, to create new programs, to raise taxes and to lavish favors on the middle class and corporate America is bound to build. The natural inclination of Congress, whether in Republican or Democratic hands, is to succumb to these temptations. Protecting the spending path to a balanced budget in 2002 will take a heroic effort by Republicans. They'll be on defense the whole time. And the thrill of Washington will soon vanish for them, too.



THERE ARE TWO THINGS DIFFERent about congressional Republicans, however. One is they've got a visionary leader, Newt, with a vision of small government and a less potent Washington. But you're surely surfeited on info about him, right? The second thing is the conservatism of the new Republicans, not just the seventy-three elected to the House in 1994, but the classes of 1992 and 1990 as well. They're a majority of the GOP caucus, and, like Newt, they are post-Reagan conservatives. They're more ideological, more libertarian, more partisan, more impatient. They are hostile to most federal programs. The best way to judge the conservatism of House Republicans is to consider Richard Nixon, a GOP House member from 1946 to 1950. If he were a member of the House Republican caucus today, he'd be by far the most liberal member. He'd be more liberal than probably fifty of the fifty-four GOP senators as well.

FOR ALL THE SUPERFICIAL POLITIcal sense it makes, President Clinton's response to Republican hegemony in Congress still baffles me. He has no agenda this year: no deficit reduction plan, no Medicare rescue scheme, no welfare reform proposal, no health reform initiative. His strategy is to let Republicans make the proposals and then stew in their own juices as he kibitzes from the sidelines. After all, that's what Republicans did to Clinton last year on health care. There's a key difference, though. Republicans were a minority in Congress, the opposition, and he was president. He still is. That's the point. It's unpresidential to stand aside, and if there's one person who can't afford to look unpresidential, it's Clinton. The old saying is the president proposes, the Congress disposes. Now Congress does both, and Clinton's only role is the occasional veto. OK, he has picked a couple of fights. But these are also unpresidential. Everything Democrats have created in government programs and policies—the liberal welfare state—is under threat in 1995 as never before. Does Clinton step forward with a full-throated defense? Far from it. He has picked an irrelevant fight with the National Rifle Association, even insisting on how the NRA should distribute its money from a controversial fund-raising letter. How does he use his big commencement address at the University of Michigan? Not to defend government programs from their real enemy, conservatives, but to attack militias, a fringe force at worst but the easiest political target of all, post-Oklahoma City.

FOR LIBERALS, THERE'S ONE PIECE of good news. In my ten years at TNR, the negative mail has poured in, zinging me for what I wrote or what I said on TV or just for being at TNR. Well, critics, your ship has come in. I'm leaving TNR (but not Washington) to help start a new weekly conservative magazine, *The Standard*. I've loved every moment at TNR. For me, TNR is the standard against which *The Standard* will be measured. And, if the new magazine's ever mentioned in the same breath as TNR as having even a small fraction of TNR's prescience, influence and zip, I'll know it's doing well.

FRED BARNES

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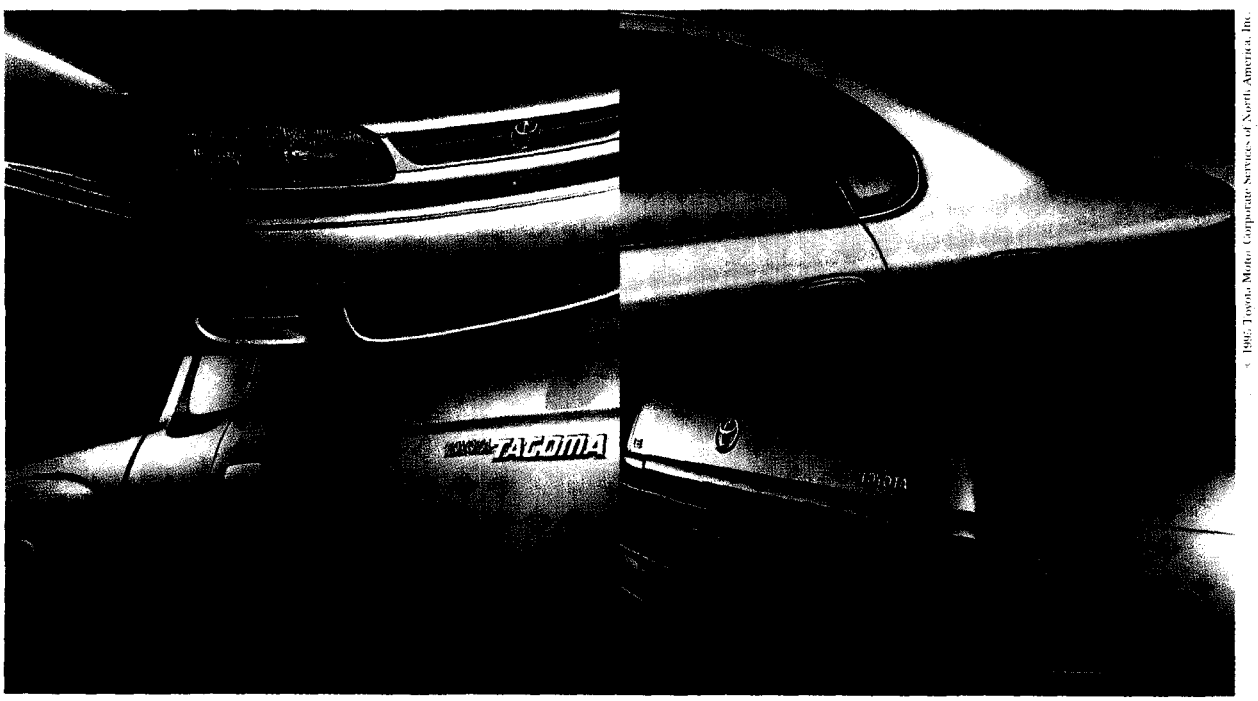

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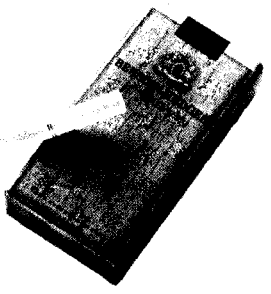

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